

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 1, 2024
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMEMBER NINA AHMAD
COUNCILMEMBER CINDY BASS
COUNCILMEMBER JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMEMBER KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMEMBER JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMEMBER CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMEMBER RUE LANDAU
COUNCILMEMBER QUETCY LOZADA
COUNCILMEMBER ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMEMBER ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILMEMBER JEFFERY YOUNG, JR.
BILLS 240179, 240180, 240181, and 240182
RESOLUTION 240193
- - -

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Good

3 morning, everyone.

4 (Good morning.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Good

6 morning, everyone.

7 (Good morning.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: This is the
9 public hearing and public meeting of the
10 Committee of the Whole regarding bills number
11 240179, 240180, 240181, 240182, and resolution
12 number 240193. Ms. Loughhead, will you please
13 call the roll to attendance?

14 THE CLERK: Councilmember Squilla.

15 (No response.)

16 THE CLERK: Councilmember Gauthier.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: Present.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember Jones.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Present.

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember Young.

21 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Present.

22 THE CLERK: Councilmember Driscoll.

23 (No response.)

24 THE CLERK: Councilmember Lozada.

25 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Present.

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2 THE CLERK: Councilmember Bass.
3 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Present.
4 THE CLERK: Councilmember Phillips.
5 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Present.
6 THE CLERK: Councilmember O'Neill.
7 (No response.)
8 THE CLERK: Councilmember Gilmore
9 Richardson.
10 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Present.
11 THE CLERK: Councilmember Thomas.
12 (No response.)
13 THE CLERK: Councilmember Harrity.
14 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Present.
15 THE CLERK: Councilmember Ahmad.
16 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Present.
17 THE CLERK: Councilmember Landau.
18 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Present.
19 THE CLERK: Councilmember Brooks.
20 (No response.)
21 THE CLERK: Councilmember O'Rourke.
22 (No response.)
23 THE CLERK: Council President Johnson.
24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Present.
25 Thank you. A quorum of the committee is present

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2 and this hearing is now called to order. Ms.
3 Loughhead, will you please read the title of the
4 bills and resolutions?

5 THE CLERK: Bill number 240179, an
6 ordinance to adopt the operating budget for
7 fiscal year 2025. Bill number 240180, an
8 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800 of the
9 Philadelphia Code entitled "School Tax
10 Authorization" to provide for an increase in the
11 tax that the Board of Education of the School
12 District of Philadelphia is authorized to impose
13 on real estate, and amending Chapter 19-1300
14 entitled "Real Estate Taxes" to establish an
15 equivalent reduction in tax rate for the City
16 real estate tax and making technical changes, all
17 under certain terms and conditions.

18 Bill number 240181, an ordinance to
19 adopt a fiscal year 2025 capital budget. Bill
20 number 240182, an ordinance to adopt a capital
21 program for the six fiscal years 2025 through
22 2030 inclusive. Resolution number 240193,
23 providing for the approval by the Council of the
24 City of Philadelphia of a revised five year
25 financial plan for the City of Philadelphia

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2 covering fiscal years 2025 through 2029 and
3 incorporating revisions with respect of fiscal
4 year 2024, which is to be submitted by the mayor
5 to the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation
6 Authority pursuant to an intergovernmental
7 cooperation agreement by and between the City and
8 the authority.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
10 very much. Today, we will continue to public
11 hearing the Committee of the Whole to consider
12 the bills read by the clerk that constitute
13 proposed operating and capital spending measures
14 for fiscal year 2025, a capital program, and a
15 forward looking capital plan for fiscal year 2025
16 through fiscal year 2030. This morning, we will
17 hear testimony from the public.

18 Before proceeding, I will lay a few
19 ground rules on how we will proceed with public
20 testimony today. We are here today to hear from
21 you about the proposed budget for the City of
22 Philadelphia and School District. To ensure that
23 there is an opportunity for all of you to be
24 heard, certain ground rules have been established
25 as follows.

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2 Your testimony should be related to the
3 bills listed on the calendar. Once your name is
4 called, you will then have up to two minutes to
5 speak. In order to be fair to all those wishing
6 to speak, I intend to hold faithfully to the two
7 minute limit. Once you are asked to begin your
8 testimony, a timer will be started. When there
9 are 30 seconds remaining to your time, you will
10 be reminded of this.

11 Once your allotted time has elapsed,
12 you will be asked to conclude your remarks. We
13 have a very, very extensively long list, which I
14 believe is great because it shows civic
15 participation in our budget process. I will now
16 ask Ms. Loughhead to please read the name of our
17 first two speakers coming up to the table to
18 testify.

19 THE CLERK: Judith Robinson. Michelle
20 Gaffney.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The Chair
22 recognizes Councilmember Jeffery Young.

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank you, Mr.
24 President. Just as we are listening to the
25 public comment on our city's budget and our

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2 school district budget, I just had to make a
3 statement regarding yesterday's budget hearing
4 that we have at the School District of
5 Philadelphia. For the public, I just want to put
6 some things in perspective for you that our
7 school district's proposed budget is \$4.6
8 billion, which is the same size as the City of
9 Boston's budget combined. And with a similar
10 size school district, Houston, for example, they
11 have almost 200,000 students. Their budget is
12 \$2.2 billion. Right? So let's put things into
13 perspective when we are commenting on our school
14 district budget.

15 I just want to express some
16 disappointment in knowing that educational
17 achievement was a third priority for the school
18 district and that there are some things that the
19 school district has been doing to save money, but
20 unfortunately, they are not doing it throughout
21 the entire district because it's too hard to do,
22 essentially, is what the answer that we received.

23 But I want to let the public know that
24 we are here to do the hard work. We're here to
25 do the hard work to change lives, because you

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2 look around our city and you look at the
3 increases in youth gun violence, they're in my
4 district, right. And that has a direct
5 correlation on education.

6 And as someone who is raising a black
7 male in this city, myself, I'm sure Councilmember
8 Thomas agrees, I'm sure Council President Johnson
9 agrees, I'm sure Councilwoman Kathy Gilmore
10 Richardson agrees. I'm sure our mayor agrees.
11 We are raising black boys in this city, so we
12 have to do the hard work for our children in
13 order to make sure that they're growing up in a
14 much better, safer, and more educated city. So
15 for the public, I just want you all to know that
16 I'm willing to do the hard work to make the
17 necessary changes to turn our school district
18 around. So thank you, Mr. President, for
19 allowing me the time.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: You're
21 welcome, Councilmember Young.

22 THE CLERK: And could we also have
23 Yusefa Smith and Charisma Presley make their way?

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Ms.
25 Gaffney, just state your name for the record and

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2 please begin your testimony.

3 MS. GAFFNEY: I believe I'm number 2.

4 I don't know if --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Oh, Judith
6 Robinson, she's not here.

7 MS. GAFFNEY: Oh, okay. Good morning,
8 Councilmembers. My name is Michelle Gaffney.
9 I'm a Philadelphia homeowner, a voting resident,
10 community educator, and an advocate for adjacent
11 construction safety and neighbors rights. I'm
12 here to speak on the licenses and inspections
13 FY 25 budget today.

14 I'd like to express my support for the
15 restructurings of L&I into the divisions of
16 quality of life and inspection, safety, and
17 compliance. I'm also to ask that both L&I and
18 other connected offices and agencies
19 intersectionally incorporate the following
20 priorities into your FY-25 budget strategy.
21 These recommendations are informed by input from
22 fellow advocates in this space and my own
23 observations and experience assisting victims of
24 negligent construction practices.

25 One, institute a developer's license

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2 and hold developers at the top accountable for
3 their track record across all projects and LLCs.
4 Two, hire and incorporate constituent facing
5 community engagement staff into the quality of
6 life division. Three, actively solicit input and
7 involvement from impacted constituents and
8 advocacy groups who have already been working in
9 this space as you build out the quality of life
10 division.

11 Regarding the developer's license,
12 every business entrepreneur must acquire a
13 license in Philadelphia, and a real estate
14 developer should be no different. L&I needs to
15 be able to revoke the right to buy and develop
16 land in Philadelphia from egregious repeat
17 offenders who foster a race to the bottom
18 constraint construction industry. Therefore, it
19 is crucial that L&I be able to track an
20 individual developer's record from LLC to LLC.

21 Developers must be held accountable for
22 their cumulative history of damages, violations,
23 and repeat offenses, not just against L&I, but
24 other departments that issue violations in the
25 City connected to constructions. Developers who

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2 continually make hiring decisions in pursuit of
3 the most possible return on investment at the
4 expense of quality, safety, and expertise, and
5 with the knowledge they'll get away with it nine
6 times out of 10 and they budget in the fines,
7 will continue to do so if there's no
8 accountability at the very top.

9 Until there's a very real threat of
10 financial and personal consequences to the person
11 making the hiring decisions at the top,
12 developers will continue hiring contractors
13 willing to cut corners and undercut law abiding
14 Philadelphia businesses.

15 Hiring and prioritizing community
16 engagement staff. We desperately need citywide
17 management and case management structure
18 dedicated to receiving, triaging, and tracking
19 data related to residential construction damage
20 cases. It is unfair and unreasonable to expect a
21 building inspector to take on additional
22 responsibilities outside of the scope of their
23 actual role in order to fill this gap in support
24 of services at L&I.

25 Hiring for this kind of support can aid

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2 the department's public outreach and education
3 goals and maintain open communication lines with
4 residents. I'm almost done, I promise. The City
5 must take responsibility for the complex web of
6 agencies and requirements that intersect with
7 construction damage. A citywide case management
8 structure would save the City hours upon hours of
9 time and labor and taxpayer money and cost across
10 all agencies that touch construction sites.

11 Lastly, again, residents and peer
12 advocacy constituent groups that have already
13 been filling this void for several years have got
14 to be invited to the table to participate in this
15 work. Neighbors deserve rights and a say when
16 construction impacts their quality of life. I'm
17 happy to make myself available for further
18 discussion. Further details related to my
19 testimony can be found online at
20 buildlikeyoulivehere.org.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
22 very much. Oh, what website online? Go ahead.

23 MS. GAFFNEY: buildlikeyoulivehere.org.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 buildlikeyoulivehere.org

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2 MS. GAFFNEY: Yes, because I believe
3 that developers and contractors --

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I like
5 that.

6 MS. GAFFNEY: -- should build like they
7 live here, like they're going to be your
8 neighbor. And if they did, they would not behave
9 the way that they do if they had to be your
10 neighbor.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
12 very much. I feel the same way about the
13 Philadelphia School District. If we sent our
14 kids there, we'd probably have high achievement
15 rates. But thank you very much. I just want to
16 point out something real quick as we call on the
17 next. I also recommend that you speak with
18 Councilmember Mike Driscoll, who led the L&I task
19 force, whenever you get a chance, and also
20 Councilmember Jeffery J. Young, who recently
21 introduced a bill to hold contractors and
22 developers accountable who are building and those
23 that have destructed individual homes who are
24 adjacent to them. So now they will be held
25 liable.

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2 MS. GAFFNEY: Is that the bill that
3 requires them to put --

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: On the
5 insurance, yeah.

6 MS. GAFFNEY: -- the neighbor on their
7 insurance?

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Yes.

9 MS. GAFFNEY: I highly support and
10 endorse that bill. It's something we've been
11 fighting for for years. Homeowners insurance
12 does not cover manmade damage. They will tell
13 you it wasn't a flood or a fire, so you're on
14 your own. It's treated as a civil issue between
15 two private property owners, but the power
16 disparity is far too great. One is a grandma on
17 Social Security who can't afford a lawyer, and
18 the other has an attorney on payroll and has a
19 high profit mentality and doesn't care. So we
20 need these protections. Thank you very much for
21 proposing that bill. I support it.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
23 very much. You can just state your name for the
24 record and please begin.

25 MS. SMITH: Yusefa Smith.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Go ahead,
3 Ms. Smith.

4 MS. SMITH: Good morning. As I said,
5 my name is Yusefa Smith, and I work at Community
6 College of Philadelphia. I'm here today with my
7 coworkers to deliver a bargaining petition that
8 over 600 of my colleagues and I have signed. We
9 began contract negotiations in January of this
10 year. We signed this petition as workers at CCP
11 to show our support for our bargaining proposals.
12 Our proposals are guided by the needs that our
13 members expressed in bargaining surveys, and our
14 elected negotiating teams have been working
15 tirelessly to win them.

16 This petition shows our collective
17 effort to win dignity and respect, to win living
18 wages that address the impact of inflation, to
19 win working conditions that provide the support
20 our students need to succeed, and to win tangible
21 commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

22 We are here today in City Hall to call
23 the City of Philadelphia to budget for a 20
24 million increase in operating funding to CCP so
25 that we can make sure these needs are met and we

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2 agree to three fair contracts. You'll hear today
3 from faculty and students about why we need 20
4 million more to serve our students and provide
5 access to high quality education to
6 Philadelphians.

7 My grandma, who raised me, proudly
8 graduated from CCP in 1980. She said, and I
9 quote, that CCP was the best move I ever made.
10 And she said it with a little sass. You see, my
11 grandma has seven children. Her first child, she
12 had at the age of 14. And raising seven children
13 in Philadelphia was a challenge. Yet, at the age
14 of 38, she chose CCP for its affordability and
15 because it provided a pathway to a professional
16 job with medical and retirement benefits. My
17 grandma's associate degree changed her life. And
18 because it changed her life, it changed mine,
19 too. The investment CCP made in her was also an
20 investment in me.

21 If we aspire to truly be Philadelphia's
22 college, to change the lives of all people in
23 Philadelphia, we need greater funding from the
24 City.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you

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2 very much.

3 (Applause.)

4 THE CLERK: Next, we have Charisma
5 Presley and Phoebe Dougherty. Following them,
6 we'll have Sterling Scott and Robert Jones.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: This is
8 what it's all about. What's your name, young
9 lady? Okay.

10 MS. PRESLEY: She's going to let me go
11 first.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: It's okay.

13 MS. PRESLEY: Good morning. My name is
14 Charisma, and I'm from the Nicetown Germantown
15 Community and with the Friends of Philly
16 Aquatics. I thank Councilwoman Bass for
17 connecting with our group and supporting the
18 reopening of the school district's own Pickett
19 pool and rebuilding of Marcus Foster public pool.
20 From the school district to the mayor's office,
21 I've been hearing about the need to be
22 intentional about prioritizing communities
23 impacted by racial disparities. The school
24 district went one step further and identified
25 seven neglected zip codes that it planned to

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2 target to get better access to the sitting magnet
3 schools and the resources available at those
4 schools.

5 The majority of those magnet schools
6 have swim teams, yet only one priority zip code
7 has an indoor swimming pool. Here's the thing,
8 with joining a magnet school swim team, you need
9 to know how to swim. Placing the student in a
10 school but denying that student access to the
11 resources like a swim team is not equity. It is
12 borderline cruelty. Welcome to our magnet
13 school, where you can watch the other kids
14 participate.

15 The majority of Philadelphians don't
16 have access to public indoor pools year round.
17 You have to pay for a membership or commute to
18 the only public indoor pool in Philadelphia,
19 which is Lincoln High School in the Northeast.

20 To prioritize someone means to treat
21 them with highest regard and to consider them
22 first. If we are serious about prioritizing
23 communities impacted by racial inspirities, and
24 we must commit to rebuilding and reopening all
25 the districts and door pools, particularly Marcus

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2 Foster and Pickett, which lie squarely inside a
3 cluster of neglected ZIP codes.

4 If we are serious about one
5 Philadelphia united city, then we need a
6 collective solution and collaborative funding to
7 address neighborhood disparities and public
8 aquatic access. The prioritized ZIP codes
9 continue to fill the inequities and longstanding
10 neglect that impact lifeguard shortages, outdoor
11 pool opening delays, and an increased risk of
12 black and brown deaths due to drowning. To truly
13 prioritize require us to address these
14 disparities with urgency.

15 In addition, we have -- in addition,
16 having these facilities operational will allow
17 for the mayor and the district to achieve their
18 year round access to educational opportunities
19 because renovations would give these facilities
20 multipurpose use. Dr. King once said, "The time
21 is always right to do what is right." And that
22 time has come for us to bring the school district
23 indoor pools back online, starting with the
24 renovation of Pickett and the rebuilding of
25 Marcus Foster. Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 MS. DOUGHERTY: Hello. My name is
4 Phoebe, and I am from the Nicetown Germantown
5 community. Good morning, Councilwoman Bass.
6 Thank you for connecting with us and supporting
7 the pools. So I hate sports. I hate when balls
8 are thrown at me and I hate any sport that makes
9 me sweaty. This is why I love swimming. My mom
10 says sports build character, but I don't want to
11 be a character. I like being Phoebe.

12 Monday and Tuesday were so hot, I asked
13 my mom if we could go swimming. And she said,
14 "No, public pools aren't open right now or close
15 to our house." I remember Lincoln pool and said
16 it was open. And she said, "Do you have gas
17 money?" I told her it was hot. She said, "Go
18 stand in front of the fan." Then I told her --
19 then she said, "Let's go to softball practice."
20 Can someone tell her we're in a heat wave?

21 So after practice, I told her I wanted
22 to jump in the water. And she said, "The shower
23 is waiting." So I realized two things. One, I
24 need to pool that's public, close to our house,
25 and open year round. Two, I need to find me a

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2 friend with a membership to the clock or YMCA.

3 Anyone got a membership to these private pools

4 and looking for a friend?

5 My conclusion is that we need the

6 School District to renovate Pickett pool and

7 rebuild Marcus Foster so we can go swimming all

8 year round in our community, because climate

9 change has winters and springs feeling like

10 summers.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. PRESLEY: I just wanted to share

13 with you, Phoebe drew the picture of the City of

14 Philadelphia. This is the cluster of neglected

15 zip codes. This is Lincoln. This is Sayre.

16 There are no pools in here to support that

17 cluster.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you,

20 Phoebe, for your leadership and the courage to

21 come and speak your truth in this body, the city

22 council. That's what it's all about.

23 MR. SCOTT: Thank you, City Council.

24 Sterling Scott from the Citizen Congress in

25 Nicetown, also block captain for the more

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2 beautiful Committee of Philadelphia Parks and
3 Recreation Department. I'd like to start off to
4 say the purpose of government is to make it easy
5 to do good and evil to be hard. We need these
6 pools. We need the schools funded so they can be
7 a part of our programs and we can be a part of
8 theirs.

9 The Pickett and the Marcus Foster pools
10 will help aid in eliminating a lot of violence in
11 the neighborhood. When we was growing up, it was
12 always swimming, hardly any fighting. That was
13 done outside after everything is over with. But
14 for the most part, we need to have these schools
15 funded, these pools funded. And like I said, we
16 do our part up in Nicetown to keep the violence,
17 every day, keep that down. There's no fighting,
18 nothing going on in our area. And we want to
19 keep it that way.

20 And with the support of having these
21 pools that will keep all these violence and stuff
22 to a minimum, and we can teach the children how
23 to swim, the seniors can have a place where they
24 can come and exercise and relax and maintain the
25 juveniles, where they can have programs,

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2 basketball, football, and things of that nature.

3 Thank you again. I'm going to be at
4 every meeting, budget meeting, hearing meeting,
5 until we get something done in our section of the
6 City that has been neglected for years. And I
7 can say, again, that will help alleviate a lot of
8 violence in the neighborhoods. Thank you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you.

10 MR. JONES: Thank you, Sterling. My
11 name is Robert D. Jones, Jr. I'm a committee man
12 for the 13th Ward, Ninth Division, located in
13 Nicetown. We need these pools open up for these
14 kids. They need to learn how to swim. They need
15 to learn to do right, know right from wrong. And
16 all I know is that we need your help.

17 And I want to thank everybody for
18 coming out here and listening to us because these
19 kids, they are very, very smart kids, and they
20 are learning. And they are learning from us
21 because we have to back their play up. We got to
22 back their play up. And that's all I got to say.
23 We got to back these kids up. Open these pools
24 up for them. All right?

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you,

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2 sir.

3 THE CLERK: Next we have M. Asli Dukan
4 and Carol Rogers, followed by Sherrie Cohen and
5 Tanya Rambert.

6 MS. DUKAN: Good morning, and happy May
7 day to all the workers in the room and around the
8 world. My name is M. Asli Dukan. I am an
9 adjunct professor at Community College of
10 Philadelphia. I'm also the part-time and
11 visiting lecturer organizer for AFT Local 2026 at
12 the college. I'm speaking to you today as a
13 working class educator and artist in
14 Philadelphia.

15 For the past 10 years, I have been
16 teaching college students the art, craft, and
17 business of film and video production. During
18 this time, I have also been creating my own art
19 as a filmmaker focused on telling liberatory
20 stories. Lately, I've had the opportunity to
21 bring these worlds together in one of my classes
22 at CCP, and this opportunity has taught me so
23 much.

24 For the past two years, my students and
25 I have collaborated on the creation of an

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2 episodic series that we have named Class of
3 Tomorrow. In this series, my students have
4 written, produced, and directed episodes that
5 center the stories of fictional students who
6 attend a fictional college in a fictional city.
7 It is a college embedded in a near future
8 dystopian society that professes to be the best
9 and only chance for students to achieve a better
10 future for their own lives.

11 Now, this class is not just about the
12 students learning and practicing the skills they
13 will need to work in the entertainment industry.
14 It is also about them envisioning what is
15 possible for their own lives and futures. My
16 students are looking at the real world around
17 them and asking questions about why things are
18 the way they are and using these questions as
19 source material for their stories.

20 My students are engaging with subjects
21 like the lack of access to fully funded public
22 services in their city, about the need for
23 healthy and safe homes for students, about
24 protecting the rights of workers at the college,
25 and about the effect of policing on students, and

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2 about the need for their college to adequately
3 fund the education that the students deserve.

4 What I am learning from my students is
5 that they want funding that keeps their community
6 safe, healthy, and whole. They want a budget
7 that invests in the most marginalized communities
8 in Philadelphia. And my students know that
9 additional funding can make their futures better
10 because they are literally creating stories about
11 what a future looks like without the funding.

12 So please, tax the rich, bring us a
13 people's budget, and give CCP the \$20 million we
14 deserve. And solidarity with the people of the
15 Congo, Haiti, Sudan, and Palestine, and the
16 students encampments. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
19 for your testimony.

20 THE CLERK: Next we have Carol Rogers
21 and Sherrie Cohen, followed by Tanya Rambert and
22 Kelsey Leon. Sonya Sanders? Bonita Tillman?

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
25 your name for the record and you can proceed with

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2 your testimony.

3 MS. TILLMAN: Sure. My name is
4 Chaplain Dr. Bonita Tillman. I am a chaplain
5 with the 35th Police District. I also am a
6 committee woman in the 42nd Ward, 16th District.
7 I'm an educator, I'm parent, and a citizen of the
8 City. A public servant. We all are. We
9 supposed to serve the public. I just turned 39
10 on Sunday, and as I get older, I become a
11 solutionist. And as a public servant, we solve
12 problems or we got to solve solutions, and we
13 need funding for our children.

14 As an educator, I shouldn't have to
15 take money out of my pocket to buy uniforms or
16 buy water bottles because the classroom is hot,
17 buy supplies, things of that nature. As a parent
18 of a child that's disabled, I shouldn't be told
19 by the school that they can't provide the
20 services for my son so he can have the best
21 quality of education because they just don't have
22 the staff in.

23 We ask for 100 million, three percent.
24 Teachers need training. Staff need training.
25 All staff need training to do their job the best

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2 way they can and to find the support staff the
3 kids need, especially the ones that have special
4 needs. So that's all staff. I don't care if
5 they work in a gym. I don't care if they're the
6 cleaning staff. I don't care if they serve the
7 kids. I don't care if they're teacher or nurse.
8 We also need more nurses and therapists and
9 things of that nature.

10 It's disheartening to me as a parent,
11 as a citizen, because our children -- we are
12 responsible for our children. They come up
13 behind us, and we have to teach them. And if
14 they're not properly taught and educated, how can
15 they fill our seats? So that's our job. That's
16 our duty. So as I conclude, I just need you to
17 remember we are public servants. We serve the
18 public. We need to serve our kids. We're asking
19 for three percent, 100 million. And that's not
20 even a lot of money, but it's a start. Thank you
21 for allowing me to speak.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
24 for your testimony.

25 THE CLERK: Next we have Nate House.

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2 Aunja Richards? Marissa Johnson?

3 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
4 your name for this record and proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MR. HOUSE: Sure. Am I going first?

7 MS. RICHARDS: Hi, my name is Aunja
8 Richards.

9 MR. HOUSE: Good morning. My name is
10 Nate House, and I'm the full-time faculty cochair
11 of the Faculty and Staff Federation of Community
12 College of Philadelphia. I'm also a professor of
13 mass media and English and proud to say that I've
14 been at the college for 15 years. We're here
15 today to ask for a 20 million increase to our
16 operating budgets to support students, bring half
17 our underpaid classified workers up to a livable
18 wage, and fund the proposals we currently have on
19 the bargaining table that seek to make the City's
20 college the beacon of hope it has been for so
21 many students but needs to be for so many more.

22 And today, I'm filled with hope because
23 I see so many people in this room who, like us,
24 believe in the promise of a just Philadelphia for
25 all citizens. Thank you for all you've done to

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2 make this dream a reality. But as we all know,
3 that dream of justice for all Philadelphians
4 doesn't yet exist.

5 While the Pew State of the City report
6 points to the current economic health of the
7 City, it also highlights a disturbing wealth
8 inequality along racial lines. The majority of
9 our students are students of color. With
10 additional funding, we can help close that gap
11 and work towards the reality of economic justice
12 our students deserve.

13 All of us at CCP are proud of our
14 successes, Hazim Hardeman, Rhodes scholar who
15 brilliantly debated issues in my mass media and
16 society class, former White House social
17 secretary Deesha Dyer, who just yesterday
18 promoted her new book on studio too at WHYY,
19 where another former student of mine, Andreas
20 Copes, is an audio producer. But the students
21 that haunt me the most are the ones who don't
22 make it, the geniuses who disappear halfway
23 through the semester because the challenges
24 become too great to overcome.

25 Homeless students, hungry students,

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2 students who can't afford reliable childcare,
3 students who need transportation, students who
4 need mental health services, students who need
5 smaller class sizes, more advisors, more
6 counselors, tutors, and librarians. They are
7 smart, beautiful people, and it breaks my heart
8 every day when I see that empty seat. Can I go
9 on, or is that three minutes?

10 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please
11 conclude your testimony.

12 MR. HOUSE: All right. Thanks. So
13 we're asking for a 20 million increase to make
14 sure that we're doing everything we can to help
15 those students stay in their seats, graduate, and
16 turn their dreams into a reality. As always, the
17 question, one that our students ask on a daily
18 basis, is, how can we afford it?

19 Well, here's one answer. For decades,
20 the City of Philadelphia has repeatedly cut taxes
21 for corporations, real estate developers, and the
22 rich. In a region with 15 Fortune 500 companies,
23 10 billionaires, and the biggest concentration of
24 millionaires in the state, it's time to tax the
25 rich who benefit from all city services so that

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2 we can fully fund not just CCP, but all essential
3 city services so that when our time at CCP, City
4 Council, the mayor's office is done, we can
5 proudly say that Philadelphia is no longer
6 America's poorest big city, but the beacon of
7 hope we all knew it could be. Thank you.

8 MS. RICHARDS: Hi, everyone. My name
9 is Aunja Richards. I am here on behalf of the
10 residents of the 19124 zip code. I am president
11 of Overington Park. I'm an undergraduate student
12 studying public service and leadership at the
13 University of Villanova, and I'm a social worker.
14 I am here to ask the City to give consideration
15 to funding parks and creating a budget for park
16 programming.

17 As a resident of the 19124 zip code and
18 park president, I have personally dealt with
19 needles in the park, trying to maintain the park
20 and increase community engagement in our area.
21 The park has four dead trees, graffitied benches,
22 and a lack of park maintenance such as trash
23 collection and outdated supplies. We need to
24 invest in programming for communities,
25 specifically kids. We need to invest in our

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2 parks, our schools and sustainable projects.

3 Our park won the conservancy grant,
4 with the terms being \$1,000 reimbursement or a
5 movie night, and the park does not have \$1,000 to
6 even start with to obtain the reimbursement. We
7 are hoping to obtain the activity grant to do
8 more, but there is little grant access for park
9 groups. Most park members are not mobile and
10 cannot do the jobs of parks and rec.

11 As a current college student studying
12 public service at Villanova University, it is
13 disheartening to watch our city not provide
14 communities with pathways to sustainability.
15 With new leadership within our city, I'm asking
16 that your next moves as Council to be intentional
17 and to act on the behalf of the communities you
18 claim to represent. Thank you.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 THE CLERK: Marissa Johnson, Charlie
22 Allison. Those two will be followed by Margaret
23 Lowenstein and Gloria Pressley.

24 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
25 your name for the record and proceed with your

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2 testimony.

3 MS. JOHNSON VALENZUELA: Yeah, hi. My
4 name is Marissa Johnson Valenzuela, and I am one
5 of very few Latina faculty at Community College
6 of Philadelphia. And we have 18 percent Latinx
7 students now. So it's one of the things I'm
8 invested in. We also have majority black
9 students, and while we have many more black
10 faculty, we are far short of where we should be
11 to serve our diverse student body.

12 But yeah, I also want to thank
13 everybody for being here. While I respect that
14 not all city council members can be at all
15 hearings, the last time I testified, it was one
16 Republican and one person asleep. I'll leave it
17 at that. So I do appreciate it. It was very
18 depressing, and I'm excited to see City Council
19 engaging more with CCP and caring more. And I
20 know there's a lot of things you juggle, so I
21 mean no disrespect, but again, it's nice to see
22 everybody here.

23 Adjusted for inflation, full-time
24 tenure faculty like myself, starting salary is 58
25 percent less than it was in 1980. We now have

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2 more diverse faculty. We have 25 percent of
3 faculty, and yet 50 percent less pay. Our
4 student body is also more diverse than it was in
5 1980, and, again, 50 percent less pay for
6 full time tenure track faculty.

7 We don't usually like to talk about
8 ourselves much because our adjunct colleagues and
9 our staff make so much less. So we worked on
10 raising -- a big thing we worked on in the union
11 is raising the minimum wage at the college
12 because over 50 people do not make a living wage
13 as full-time staff.

14 I never looked at the MIT calculator
15 for myself. I'm a single mother of one kid. I
16 don't make a living wage for a mom and a kid.
17 I've been at CCP for 13 years. I'm tenured. I
18 was promoted to an associate professor, and I
19 don't make a living major, which would be 85.
20 I'm not even close if I work overtime.

21 So I want you to understand, we don't
22 have pensions. We are not milking it. We do
23 this work because we care deeply about our
24 students, and we need to be supported across the
25 board. Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 MR. ALLISON: Hello. My name is
4 Charlie Allison. I will be brief. I'm an
5 adjunct teacher at the Philadelphia Community
6 College. If you hold on to one phrase from this,
7 make it this one, "Teaching conditions are
8 learning conditions". Let me tell you about some
9 of the learning conditions I've personally seen
10 my time there.

11 My students are often hungry. You
12 can't learn when your stomach is rumbling. We
13 need a free meals program open to all at CCP. My
14 students sometimes had to miss class because they
15 were the only ones who could look after a small
16 child. You can't learn if you're watching over
17 another human being. Free childcare is essential
18 to both students and worker health at CCP. We
19 need free childcare at CCP for workers and
20 students.

21 Many of my students miss class because
22 they couldn't afford to ride SEPTA to class. CCP
23 needs to institute a free public transport system
24 with SEPTA so that students and workers can get
25 to class as easily as possible. This is very

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2 much in the realm of reality. Many Philadelphia
3 institutions have already done this through JAUNT
4 and other similar programs.

5 The heat and air conditioning didn't
6 work in my room and in many other classrooms,
7 meaning that my students either shivered or
8 sweated, and there wasn't a single damn thing I
9 could do about it. You can't learn when you're
10 uncomfortable.

11 In light of all these unsustainable
12 learning conditions, it's a small miracle that
13 our students have done as well as they have. The
14 \$20 million we are asking for is a first step
15 towards remedying these chronic problems of
16 hunger, childcare, transport, and on campus
17 infrastructure. The wealth to fund this sort of
18 public education exists. Tax the rich, give us a
19 people's budget. And I would clarify that the
20 additional funding for public education is not an
21 ask. It is a necessity.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Again,
24 please state your name for the record and proceed
25 with your testimony.

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2 MS. PRESSLEY: Good morning. My name
3 is Gloria Pressley. Good morning, City Council,
4 ladies and gentlemen. As we're gathered here
5 today, I am filled with profound sense of
6 gratitude and hope. For too long, the pools in
7 our community have been silent, their water
8 stagnated. But today, we stand at the dawn of a
9 new era. The reopening of the Pickett pool and
10 the rebuilding of Marcus Foster pool marks a
11 turning point for our city, a symbol of progress
12 and possibility.

13 As a mother of six, I have witnessed
14 firsthand the formative power of swimming.
15 Through swimming, my children have learned not
16 just a skill, but a tool to survive. My children
17 have found confidence, strength, and resilience.
18 Sadly, so many children will not have the same
19 opportunity that was afforded to me and mines.
20 So I'm not here to brag about my children. I'm
21 here to advocate for our children.

22 Swimming is more than just a recreation
23 activity. It is a gateway to opportunity. By
24 providing our children with access to swim
25 lesson, we are equipping them with the skills

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2 they need to stay safe in the water, to pursue
3 employment opportunities, and to find a lane and
4 chart a course towards a brighter future. But
5 the impact of these pools extend far beyond the
6 water edges. They are a symbol of community, of
7 unity, of possibility. They are a place where
8 friendship are forged, where dreams are born,
9 where futures are shaped.

10 As we reopen Pickett and rebuild Marcus
11 Foster pool, we are not just restoring a
12 structure but revitalizing a spirit. So let us
13 not see these pools as mere facilities, but as a
14 beacon of hope in our city. Let us come together
15 to comfort, to commit ourselves to ensuring that
16 every child in Philadelphia have the opportunity
17 to learn how to swim, for in the waters of these
18 pools lies the promise of a better tomorrow, a
19 tomorrow where every child can dive into their
20 dreams with confidence knowing that they have the
21 skills they need to succeed. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you.

24 THE CLERK: Next we have Mark Clincy
25 and Maritza Gerty, followed by Alyssa Weinfurtner

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2 and Sonia Rosen.

3 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
4 your name for the record and proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MS. GERTY: Maritza Gerty. Good
7 morning. My name is Maritza Gerty, and I'm a
8 Philadelphia parent that is an active voter and
9 community member. I am also constituent of Cindy
10 Bass's 8th District. I have five children, three
11 of which have gone through the Philadelphia
12 School District and two that are currently second
13 graders at Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary. I
14 also have two grandchildren, one of which will be
15 starting kindergarten this year.

16 I'm here today not to request, but to
17 demand that the resources that are currently
18 being allocated to our district be increased.
19 The current amount is not enough. A one percent
20 increase is not enough. Our children deserve a
21 larger piece of that pie. They are our leaders,
22 caretakers, and, keep this in mind, future
23 voters. I am imploring all of you that have made
24 promises to your constituents to make education
25 an important part of your agenda to follow

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2 through with it.

3 Money for education should not be a
4 fight every year. It should not be another empty
5 promise year after year or term after term. Our
6 children need access to better now. It should
7 not be a matter of what socioeconomic status of a
8 school community or the families of a particular
9 school be to determine how much money a school
10 gets. Families want a cleaner, greener, and
11 safer Philadelphia. But families also want for
12 all of our children to have access to a better
13 education.

14 Three percent would equate to better
15 paid and trained educators, better paid school
16 support staff, better and high quality materials,
17 books, and facilities that would allow our
18 children to thrive, better access to mental
19 health and social emotional supports, access to
20 things in their language, (foreign language
21 spoken). It shouldn't only be the magnet schools
22 or the schools in more affluent neighborhoods
23 that get the most. Schools in all parts of our
24 city must get more.

25 For those of you that have followed

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2 through with your promise, I thank you. For
3 those of you that are new to this, this is your
4 time to make your mark and take a stand for our
5 children now. Do not allow another generation of
6 our children to get less. They all deserve
7 better regardless of their zip code. Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. ROSEN: Hi, my name is Sonia Rosen.
10 I'm a Philly homeowner and I gladly pay property
11 taxes. I'm also a parent of an SDP student, as
12 well as a teacher educator at the University of
13 Pennsylvania. I've come in support of the
14 proposal to increase the share of property taxes
15 going to schools from 55 percent to 58 percent.
16 In a time when safety is such a concern, we need
17 to remind ourselves that an educated city is a
18 safe city. A city where children's needs are met
19 is a healthy city.

20 In thinking about what to say here
21 today, I asked my son, a sixth grader at Science
22 Leadership Academy at Beeber. Nadeem is a
23 curious, athletic 12-year-old who loves learning,
24 has a lot of good friends, and will drop
25 everything anytime to play soccer. He and many

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2 other sixth grade boys play soccer every day at
3 recess on a schoolyard surface that's nothing but
4 cracked, uneven concrete slabs with a ball held
5 together by a thread, using a tiny net that the
6 assistant principal scrounged up for them with
7 his own resources. Soccer is one of the things
8 that keeps them interested and focused on their
9 schoolwork. It keeps them moving so they can
10 come into their overcrowded classes and be as
11 attentive and ready to learn as possible.

12 Nadeem likes his teachers and has
13 learned a lot at Beeber. He is smart as a whip,
14 too. So yesterday I asked him what he wanted me
15 to say to you at this testimony. At first he
16 told me to remind you that we need the district
17 to serve better lunches. I laughed and said this
18 was likely not going to be a priority.

19 As I pushed him to think further, it
20 became clear that there were things he didn't
21 even consider asking for because the bare bones
22 norm he had gotten used to let him think that
23 they were an impossibility, classes with fewer
24 than 30 kids, real art and music courses, a
25 school library with a librarian, a schoolyard

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2 that is more than a crumbling, desolate, concrete
3 landscape.

4 When he realized that more money for
5 his school would mean more teachers, smaller
6 classes, and a schoolyard that is built for
7 children, his eyes lit up at the idea that his
8 classes might not be severely overcrowded and
9 that he and his friends could one day play soccer
10 with decent equipment in a space where they won't
11 get injured if they fall. What a basic ask. Can
12 you imagine a student in any of our suburban
13 school districts around Philadelphia saying
14 something like this?

15 What does it say about our city that we
16 prioritize giving more and more money to an
17 already over funded police force and developers
18 - sorry, I know I'm not supposed to say that --
19 over the basic educational needs of
20 Philadelphia's beautiful, brilliant children? I
21 pointed out the limits to my son's imagination
22 about what could be possible in school, but
23 really, it's we as adults whose imagination is
24 limited.

25 Here we are in a city lucky to have

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2 thousands of children with boundless potential
3 for contributing to our city and society. I
4 invite you to imagine what is possible if we give
5 them the love and resources they deserve. A vote
6 for 58 percent is a vote for the present and
7 future of our Philadelphia children.

8 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 THE CLERK: Next up, we have Kaniyu Ado
11 Kuntanley (phonetic) and Stephanie Blake,
12 followed by Donna Cooper and Melissa Toby.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
14 your name for the record and proceed with your
15 testimony.

16 MS. WEINFURTNER: Yes. Hi, my name is
17 Alyssa Weinfurtner. I'm a social worker and
18 director at Valley Youth House for Emergency
19 Services program supporting youth that experience
20 homelessness. And I'm here today to talk about
21 funding for students experiencing homelessness.

22 Since January of 2023, we saw historic
23 investment in addressing students experiencing
24 homelessness through COVID American Rescue Plan
25 dollars. These crucial dollars increase the

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2 Education for Children & Youth Experiencing
3 Homelessness office's capacity to address the
4 needs of these students and families. Currently,
5 that office receives no Philadelphia county
6 funding or state funding. It's only currently
7 funded through federal funding under the
8 McKinney-Vento Act.

9 As these funds expire, however, it's
10 paramount to secure a commitment to replace them
11 to sustain the progress that's been made in
12 developing a comprehensive approach to support
13 these students and enhance the capacity to fully
14 understand the extent and impact of this
15 homelessness on our students. Over 8,000
16 students were identified as experiencing
17 homelessness in the year of 2021 to 2022.

18 Experts say we estimate it's well over 10,000.
19 Part of this is due to the school's limited
20 capacity to identify and support these students.
21 These funds go to expanding that capacity to be
22 able to do just that.

23 In Philly, these funds were used to
24 embark on a collaborative between community,
25 nonprofit agencies, the Equia office, and over 60

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2 Philadelphia public schools. Funding was used
3 for program coordinators to be put in the highest
4 need schools, a school district liaison the first
5 time ever between the Office of Homeless Services
6 and the school district, and three programs run
7 by community based nonprofits. These initiatives
8 helped address the limited capacities of school
9 counselors and support staffs and establish trust
10 with young people.

11 At Valley Youth House, we focus on
12 unaccompanied minors and youth 14 to 21. We hear
13 stories of them coming through our doors at age
14 18 when they know they can access housing
15 services. We hear stories of youth sleeping
16 behind dumpsters and still going to school, a
17 friend sneaking them into their parent's house at
18 night so they can shower and show up so that
19 nobody notices. This student graduated. A lot
20 of them do not.

21 About 40 percent of the youth that we
22 see that come through our doors, that are 18 to
23 24, who are seeking housing and experiencing
24 literal homelessness in shelters, fleeing
25 violence, sleeping on the streets, have not

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2 completed their high school diploma or GED.

3 (timer beeps) I think that means my time is up.

4 I'll just add as well that if we fail
5 to invest in these programs, it's a severe equity
6 issue. About 78 percent of these students
7 experiencing homelessness are black or African
8 American, 40 percent are LGBTQ, 32 percent are
9 pregnant or parenting. We run the risk of
10 exacerbating racial disparities within our
11 community if we don't invest in these students as
12 early as possible. Thank you.

13 MS. BLAKE: Greetings. I'm Dr.
14 Stephanie Blake. I work with Children First as
15 the early childhood racial equity coordinator,
16 and currently I'm working on tackling the issues
17 of suspension and expulsion in early childhood
18 education. I also reside in Northeast
19 Philadelphia, where I reside in Councilmember
20 O'Neill's district. I'm here to testify on Bill
21 240179 and why it's imperative that City Council
22 expands PHLpreK seats.

23 Today, I would like to emphasize the
24 significance of providing young individuals with
25 an early advantage in life, which commences with

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2 preschool education. The efficacy of early
3 childhood education in shaping a child's
4 development and future achievements have been
5 consistently demonstrated by directing resources
6 towards high quality preschool programs. We're
7 not only providing children with the essential
8 tools to succeed academically, but also nurturing
9 their social and emotional growth.

10 The report Children's Learning and
11 Development Benefits from High Quality Early
12 Learning Education, released August of last year,
13 emphasized that investing in early childhood
14 education yields long term advantages, including
15 increased graduation rates, reduced crime rates,
16 and improved health outcomes. Black and brown
17 children are often underrepresented in high
18 quality childcare programs, highlighting the need
19 to level the playing field and close the
20 achievement gap.

21 Early childhood education can disrupt
22 poverty and inequality by providing essential
23 skills for academic success. Ensuring fair
24 access to preschool programs can contribute to a
25 more just society, enabling families to pursue

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2 employment and economic growth. So who wouldn't
3 want to invest in preschool?

4 As a community, we must prioritize and
5 support early childhood education to ensure that
6 all children have an equal opportunity to thrive.
7 Supporting for early childhood education not only
8 a sensible fiscal decision, but also a moral
9 obligation to guarantee a more promising future
10 for every child. So it's my honor to be able to
11 advocate for the well being and development of
12 our city's youngest residents.

13 Children are our future, and it's
14 crucial that we invest in their growth and
15 success from the very beginning. Please increase
16 PHLpreK seats in this year's budget. We need 250
17 more seats so that 250 more children and families
18 can feel the benefits of high quality pre-K.
19 Thank you for your attention and support.

20 MS. COOPER: Good morning. I'm Donna
21 Cooper with Children First. And yesterday, each
22 of you asked poignant questions to the
23 superintendent, and thank you for doing so. For
24 11 years, I've been fighting to get our schools
25 funded, and this council has been serious and

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2 steadfast in its support for the district. And
3 we at Children First appreciate what you've done.
4 And your questions yesterday exposed the
5 untenable gaps in what the charter and
6 traditional school district students face,
7 robbing far too many of our students and our city
8 of hope and opportunity. And I'm here to ask you
9 today to do more.

10 Even if the legislature, even if the
11 legislature were to fully fund Governor Shapiro's
12 school funding proposal, and we hope they do, the
13 Philadelphia school district would still be 1.1
14 billion short of what any reasonable person would
15 say is needed to give every student a quality
16 education.

17 I handed out a piece of evidence to
18 that effect. Look at the template. This
19 template is used by the school district to
20 construct school budgets. One teacher to 30
21 students in lower grades. Unacceptable. One
22 teacher to 33 students in middle grades. We know
23 middle grade students. That's a recipe for
24 failure. One counselor for every 650 students.
25 How can a student with questions get them

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2 answered in class? How can a student reeling
3 from violence get support to return to learning?
4 Or councilman Phillips, if they are bullied, how
5 can they find safety? And how can a student who
6 wants to excel get help finding a pathway?

7 Councilmember Brooks asked yesterday
8 about how our school salaries compare with other
9 districts, and Councilmember Ahmad asked for ways
10 to reduce the teacher to student ratios.
11 Councilmembers Young, Bass, and President Johnson
12 asked why our schools are struggling
13 academically. To answer your question directly,
14 school funding shortfall forces our salaries to
15 be lower than any schools in the region and our
16 conditions for teachers to be worse. No wonder
17 the district has more than 1400 vacancies now.
18 There is no curriculum improvement that can
19 compensate for classes that are too large or
20 teachers who are active looking to exit the
21 system.

22 May I say one last sentence,
23 Councilwoman? The mayor took a step forward,
24 proposing to increase the property tax share to
25 56 percent. I am here to ask you today as a

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2 taxpayer in this city, on behalf of the taxpayers
3 on my board and our staff and the parents with us
4 today, to increase that transfer to 58 percent at
5 least.

6 The city has in this proposed budget a
7 half a million surplus fund balance. We decry
8 the \$14 billion fund balance in Harrisburg and
9 say, why can't more be used to fund the schools?
10 I ask the same of Philadelphia City Council.
11 Please increase the transfer to the Philadelphia
12 schools. Thank you.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
14 for your testimony.

15 THE CLERK: Next we have Melissa Toby
16 and Jasmine Taylor, Sheryl-Amber Edmondson and
17 Theresa Carr, Darryl Bundridge.

18 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
19 your name for the record and proceed with your
20 testimony.

21 MS. CARR: My name is Theresa Carr.
22 Should I start my testimony? All right. Good
23 morning, Council President and councilmembers.
24 My name is Theresa Carr, and I am proudly serving
25 as a student success coach with City Year

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2 Philadelphia. Thank you for the opportunity to
3 share the work that City Year undertakes every
4 day to serve students throughout the City. I
5 serve at the academies at Roxborough High School
6 in Councilmember Curtis Jone's district. I
7 primarily work with ninth grade students, a
8 critical juncture for them.

9 Upon entering high school, students
10 have more autonomy and responsibility for their
11 education than ever before. By building
12 supportive mentoring relationships with students,
13 our team gives them the tools to make the right
14 decisions for their future. One of the strengths
15 of City Year's model is our consistency and our
16 immersion in the school.

17 My team is in the classrooms, but we're
18 also in the cafeteria and the hallways. I've
19 gotten to know so many students who aren't in my
20 classes through our afterschool programs,
21 initiatives like book giveaways or by bringing
22 games to the lunchroom. UNO is always the first
23 to go, just for your information.

24 Our mentorship goes hand in hand with
25 academic support. During literacy tutoring,

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2 students build comprehension and writing skills,
3 but simultaneously, we're building students'
4 internal sense of motivation and resilience. For
5 example, if I'm helping a student complete
6 missing work one on one, we'll talk through the
7 obstacles they faced, the strengths they bring to
8 the table, and celebrate their successes. To
9 grow, students need to try and persist, even if
10 they miss the market first. That's how our
11 impact outlasts our year of service.

12 Over months, tutoring and mentoring the
13 same students creates unique opportunities to
14 discover student needs and personalize
15 interventions. I've worked with students on
16 setting goals, attending class regularly and on
17 time, showing students how missing assignments
18 affect their grades, deescalating conflict,
19 restoring teacher and peer relationships. The
20 list goes on. It works because we know the
21 students and they trust us.

22 I chose to serve with City Year after
23 finishing an undergraduate degree in political
24 science. In light of widening learning gaps
25 during the pandemic, serving in education seemed

1 4/3/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 like the most tangible way to make the world a
3 more equitable place.

4 It's been so rewarding to see my
5 students grow over the year that I wanted to
6 continue that impact by teaching Philly students.
7 I accepted a position to teach English at Warren
8 G. Harding Middle School next year, and I
9 wouldn't be there without City Year. Thank you
10 so much for your time and for your continued
11 support of City Year Philadelphia.

12 MS. EDMONDSON: Greetings, Council.
13 I'm Sheryl-Amber Edmondson, a Southwest Philly
14 native, currently residing down the bottom, as we
15 like to call it, in the 3rd Councilmanic
16 District. I'm here supporting budget bill number
17 240179 for a property tax share allocation
18 increase from 55 percent to 58 percent to
19 generate \$100 million more in funding.

20 I'm a former teacher, always educator,
21 and grants manager at the fund for the School
22 District of Philadelphia. I want to talk a
23 little bit about money. I grew up poor, and
24 there's three things that you learn about money
25 very early on when you're growing up poor. One,

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2 that it doesn't grow on trees. Two, that it
3 matters. And three, that if you don't have any,
4 you don't.

5 Now, imagine a child who exits
6 poverty's front yard in the morning just to walk
7 five blocks down the street to enter poverty's
8 schoolyard. It is a uniquely visceral and
9 psychological experience, and we should not be
10 puzzled by the fruit that grows when those with
11 unmet needs find ways to satiate themselves by
12 any means necessary. And we wonder why we have
13 some of the issues we do pointing the finger,
14 that same finger that pulls the trigger when we
15 don't invest in what we say we value.

16 In the same way that investments return
17 to profit, the lack thereof comes back to haunt
18 us, and we must reckon with that. Children are
19 not the future. They are the now. And what we
20 do in this very moment with our power matters.
21 It sends a very clear and direct message to our
22 children, who are watching, anything else says
23 "No, you don't deserve."

24 In my work, I've seen amazing things
25 happen by investing in children by funding public

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2 education. This isn't about politics, power, or
3 individual people. This is about children. It
4 should never ever be about anything else.
5 Children first, children now. The only real
6 question I have --

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. EDMONDSON: The only real question
9 I have for you, Council, is what side of the coin
10 do you want to be on? Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
13 your name for the record and proceed with your
14 testimony.

15 MR. BUNDRIDGE: Darryl Bundridge.
16 Thank you, members of council, for hearing my
17 testimony regarding Bill 240179 and for your
18 continued support of City Year. I am Darryl
19 Bundridge, the proud executive director of City
20 Year Philadelphia, an education nonprofit, but
21 for 26 years has been committed to supporting
22 students, families, and communities citywide.

23 This year, our 118 AmeriCorps members
24 served more than 8,000 students in 13 schools
25 across Philly, and we are having an impact. 85

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2 percent of all students who have worked on
3 literacy with City Year have maintained a grade
4 of C or better. We're especially proud of our
5 eighth graders. 100 percent of them who started
6 with a D or F in their math assessments have
7 ended with a C or better. An impressive 94
8 percent of principals tell us they're satisfied
9 or highly satisfied with their City Year
10 partnerships, and the same tell us that of their
11 corp members in terms of sense of belonging,
12 their priorities aligning with ours, and
13 supporting student engagement.

14 Our corp members engage to prepare for
15 our city's workforce. 75 percent of our corp
16 members are educators, healthcare workers,
17 lawyers, social workers and nonprofit
18 professionals, and they stay in Philly. 29
19 percent of our alumni are educators and 14
20 percent are teachers, and that's growing. But
21 118 is not enough. We need to attract more corps
22 members to serve more students who deserve our
23 supports. More corps members will help build our
24 city's teacher pipeline.

25 As educators and other cross sector

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2 professionals like the alumni and student coach
3 you've met, we've already invested in more to
4 increase the course stipend, higher recruitment,
5 and media spend for awareness. We were
6 developing our partnership with the School
7 District to develop 10th and 11th grade
8 internships as a pathways to graduation provider.

9 And so we're asking for your support by
10 increasing our FY-25 allotment to 1.25 million,
11 which will restore funding the City's invested in
12 City Year last year to support the district's
13 ability to retain our support in at least 13
14 schools and expand our efforts to attract more
15 young people to serve in our schools and become
16 the next civically engaged leaders in our city's
17 workforce. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
20 your name for the record and proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 MS. TAYLOR: Hi. My name is Jasmine
23 Taylor. I am here to speak about IEPs for the
24 children, that something needs to be changed and
25 definitely that the teachers be trained. To

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2 handle the situation with children that are --
3 with autism children, they need to be fixed of
4 being aggressively. Why I say it's important
5 because I went through it, being in them classes
6 that teachers were very aggressive with children
7 with autism. (child cries) Sorry, that's my son.

8 Being why this is important to me,
9 because I was in a classroom with a teacher that
10 attacked me for a phone, being very aggressive
11 and being very rude. That our autism children
12 should be safe in schools. You want to take our
13 children to be safe. They need to be safe in
14 school, all children. And I feel like they need
15 to be trained for all children for gun shooting.
16 That needs to be trained for children because if
17 their child is in the hallway, where can they go?

18 They need to be trained to know where
19 they can go to be safe if something goes wrong,
20 who they can go to, who they can contact, that
21 they can be saved at all time. And I know
22 teachers need to do that for students in the
23 classroom, but where can our children go if they
24 are in hallways or going to the bathroom and
25 don't know what's going on. They need to be safe

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2 and something needs to be changed for autism
3 children and all that they be safe in all
4 situations. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
7 for your testimony. Never apologize for your
8 child. He hears his mother's voice. Moms get
9 the job done. We thank you for your testimony.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please
12 proceed to state your name for the record.

13 MS. TOBY: Good morning. My name is
14 Melissa Toby. I am the mom of Jasmine, so I
15 definitely coincide with her with speaking about
16 how the children were dealt with. I definitely
17 can coincide with saying that a lot of those
18 children that were in those classrooms when it
19 came time for graduation, to even do electives,
20 they only were kind of boxed into certain things.
21 They could either volunteer at the goodwill or go
22 to the supermarket and help bag in somebody's
23 bags. It really wasn't a wide variety of things.
24 And I definitely feel that they should open up
25 the horizon for those children to have those

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2 aspects of other considerations to do different
3 things.

4 Besides that, what I wanted to speak of
5 representing with Children First, I'm here to
6 also support the increase of allocations of the
7 property tax share going to schools for 55
8 percent to 80 -- 58 percent -- I'm sorry -- and
9 for a million dollars. I'm sorry, \$100 million.
10 I apologize.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you.
12 Could you please restate your name for the
13 record?

14 MS. TOBY: Melissa Toby.

15 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you,
16 and thank you for your testimony.

17 MS. TOBY: Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. HOLIDAY: Good morning. My name is
20 Christina Holiday. My name is Christina Holiday
21 and I serve as the 12th grade school counselor at
22 Olney High School in Councilmember Cindy Bass's
23 district. I stand before you today not only as
24 an advocate for the City Year program, but also
25 as a living testament to its transformative

1 4/3/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 power.

3 My journey with City Year began 14
4 years ago when I served as a corp member at
5 Overbrook High School, committing myself to
6 supporting and uplifting the students of
7 Philadelphia. Inspired by the impact I witnessed
8 firsthand, I continued my journey with City Year,
9 serving as a team leader for two additional years
10 at Fels High School. During this time, I had the
11 privilege of working closely with dedicated corps
12 members, witnessing the profound difference they
13 made in the lives of our city's youth.

14 City Year not only brought me to the
15 vibrant City of Philadelphia, but also ignited my
16 passion for education and gave me the love of my
17 life, my husband, Troy. It was through my
18 experiences as a corps member and team leader
19 that I discovered my calling to serve in the
20 field of education.

21 In Philadelphia, where educational
22 disparities persist, City Year serves as a vital
23 partner in bridging the gap and fostering a more
24 equitable learning environment. Their presence
25 not only improves academic outcomes, but also

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2 cultivates a sense of belonging community within
3 our schools.

4 City Year corps members actively
5 contribute to school improvement and positive
6 school connections through various means. City
7 Year has played an integral role in fostering
8 pride and community, particularly during
9 transitional periods such as when Olney shifted
10 from charter to a public high school. During
11 this time of change, City Year provided
12 invaluable support, helping to unite students,
13 faculty and staff under a shared sense of purpose
14 and identity.

15 Experiential learning is a staple of
16 City Year, fostering hands-on experiences that
17 enrich students' educational journeys. This
18 year, the City Year team at Olney led more than
19 20 seniors in a meaningful service learning
20 project, providing them with an opportunity to
21 engage with their community while fulfilling the
22 10-hour service requirement needed for Act 158.
23 Through this project, students gained valuable
24 skills, developed a deeper understanding of civic
25 responsibility, are on track to graduate, and

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2 made a tangible impact on the world around them.

3 As we reflect on the impact of City
4 Year in our city, let us recognize the invaluable
5 contributions of its corp members who embody the
6 spirit of service and dedication. Their
7 commitment to Philadelphia's youth is a testament
8 to the transformative power of mentorship and the
9 ripple effect it creates in our communities.

10 In closing, I urge the city council to
11 continue supporting initiatives like City Year
12 that invest in the future of our youth and
13 strengthen the fabric of our city. Together, let
14 us reaffirm our commitment to providing every
15 student in Philadelphia with the resources and
16 support they need to thrive. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
19 for your testimony.

20 THE CLERK: Next we have Samia
21 Evans Bolling and Ashley Rosario, followed by
22 Inella Ray and Margaret DiSanto.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
24 your name for the record and proceed with your
25 testimony.

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2 MS. EVANS-BOLLING: Hi. Yes. Good
3 morning. My name is Samia Evans-Bolling, and I
4 am a member of the 4th District. As a parent and
5 as a community member, I have worked tirelessly
6 throughout the years on numerous community
7 projects and engagement with various
8 organizations. Councilmember Mr. Anthony
9 Phillips, I especially want to thank you for your
10 work in the educational sector personally. I see
11 SLA, Beeber and CCP represented here, so shout
12 out to you guys.

13 As a parent of school District of
14 Philadelphia children, as well as someone who has
15 a vast history of working in a variety of schools
16 throughout the district and is a very active
17 member of my community, I am here today as a
18 parent partner with the Children First coalition
19 to plead with you, the members of City Council,
20 to increase the budget to the additional three
21 percent to the \$100 million. As a parent, the
22 question is, what would this three percent
23 increase look like to me?

24 Well, we can fund the school libraries
25 that have largely disappeared throughout the

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2 years. We can see the positive advantage with
3 the restored libraries as we look at the pre and
4 post-pandemic testing scores. We can update our
5 deteriorating schools. We can update our
6 deteriorating HVAC systems. We can use these
7 funds to create an environment conducive for our
8 children to learning.

9 We are urging you, members of city
10 council, to increase the budget. Otherwise, we
11 will continue to see the violence that is
12 plaguing our youth throughout the City and these
13 heartbreaking stories that we continue to see
14 play out nightly on the news. Thank you for your
15 time. A vote now will save our children in the
16 future. Again, I am Samia Evans-Bolling,
17 representative for Children First and for all
18 children and this City of Philadelphia. Thank
19 you members of City Council for your time.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. RAY: Good morning. My name is
22 Inella Ray. To the esteemed members of City
23 Council, I am a proud West Philadelphia native
24 and resided in the 3rd Councilmanic District.
25 Today, I'm asking you all in a bold proposal --

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2 I'm in coalition with the mosaic of advocates,
3 community members, educators, parents, and system
4 level leaders -- to increase the property tax
5 share allocation of schools from 55 percent to 58
6 percent. This adjustment would infuse nearly
7 \$100 million more into the School District of
8 Philadelphia, a crucial deposit towards our
9 children's future.

10 As a director of parent advocacy and
11 engagement at Children First and a board member
12 of Lift Every Voice Philly and the Philadelphia
13 Orchard Project and a member of Delta Sigma Theta
14 Sorority, Incorporated, I care deeply about the
15 future of this city and have worked tirelessly to
16 ensure that our children, youth and families and
17 communities they hail from are not just invested
18 in but are deeply cared for and empowered.

19 However, my most proudest identities
20 lie in being a public school graduate of the
21 School District of Philadelphia, shout out to
22 Academy at Palumbo, and a big sister to three
23 younger sisters, two of which who attend Science
24 Leadership Academy at Beeber, one of whom will
25 attend on a New York University on a full ride

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2 this fall and one who graduated from Kappa who
3 was on track to become a registered nurse.

4 While my sisters and I are separated by
5 some years and our age, our experiences within
6 the School District of Philadelphia are mirrored,
7 as we both have experienced the ills of what
8 happened when you don't invest in the future of
9 the City's children. Our shared experiences
10 reveal the dire consequences of underfunded
11 schools, absent nurses and librarians, an
12 overcrowded classroom, shared sports team with
13 neighboring schools, fundraising for basic
14 educational necessities, early dismissals due to
15 inadequate ventilation, and insufficient support
16 for first generation college students.

17 Reflected on the graduation in 2011,
18 which was earmarked by a dark period in
19 Philadelphia's education system caused by severe
20 budget cuts, also known as the corporate tax
21 cuts, I witnessed firsthand the devastated impact
22 on students future with my younger siblings and
23 the students who I work with at Upward Bound as a
24 tutor mentor. We cannot afford to repeat
25 history. With the American Rescue Plan funds

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2 dwindling, now is time for bold action.

3 A proposal of 55 percent to 56 in Mayor
4 Parker's proposed budget is inadequate. Anything
5 short of 58 percent is a moral failure, denying
6 our children rightful opportunities, making you
7 all complicit in injustice. I believe in the
8 genius of our students and their brilliance, and
9 I hope you do too.

10 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
11 for your testimony.

12 THE CLERK: Is there a Margaret DiSanto
13 and Makeia Elizabeth? Darlene Morris? Sarah
14 Morningstar. Jeff Williamson? Zachariah
15 Claypool White?

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
18 your name for the record and proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 MR. WHITE: Thank you. My name is
21 Zachariah Claypool White. I am an adjunct in the
22 English department at the Community College of
23 Philadelphia. It's finals week at CCP, and to be
24 honest, all of us would much rather be on campus.
25 We have papers and essays to read, exams to

1 4/3/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 grade, key facilities and services to maintain
3 and provide so that our student body can be
4 successful. But that, in fact, is why we are
5 here, because in order for our students to be
6 successful, they need and they are owed a fully
7 funded CCP.

8 It is not a novel or even original idea
9 to say that a budget is a moral document, but it
10 is. And a city budget that does not include a
11 fully funded CCP is a moral failure. Worse, it's
12 a failure that is borne by our students. This is
13 only my second semester at CCP, but in that short
14 time, I've had students drop out of my classes
15 because they couldn't afford a laptop and, due to
16 underfunding, the college was unable to provide
17 them a loaner. I've had students miss key
18 classes because they couldn't afford the SEPTA
19 fairs. I've had brilliant students who, through
20 no fault of their own, needed intensive tutoring
21 outside of class, and because of underfunding,
22 the college would not provide that.

23 I currently teach a class on writing
24 research papers. Many of my students have never,
25 in fact, written a formal research paper before.

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2 As you can imagine, this means I need to work
3 individually with each student and read through
4 multiple drafts of multiple papers. There are 24
5 students in my class. In a class of that size, I
6 cannot give the detailed feedback that my
7 students deserve. We need smaller class sizes.
8 Not only that, but because of the rate at which
9 adjuncts are paid, I have to work other jobs to
10 support myself and my loved ones. This means
11 that I have even less time for my students.

12 These should not be issues. If we are
13 truly the college of Philadelphia, then every
14 Philadelphian should be able to receive a quality
15 education at our institution. And that is why
16 the federation is demanding 20 million from the
17 City budget to meet the needs of our students and
18 finally give them the education and the community
19 college that they deserve. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. MORNINGSTAR: Hi, my name is Sarah
22 Morningstar. Good morning. I am honored to
23 speak with you today as a citizen of
24 Philadelphia, a proud parent to a toddler about
25 to enter PHLPreK, an advocate for out-of-school

1 4/3/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.
2 time programs and year round afterschool
3 enrichment, and in my role as executive director
4 at local nonprofit organization ASAP, Afterschool
5 Activities Partnerships.

6 Since 2002, ASAP has provided more than
7 100,000 Philadelphia youth with afterschool and
8 summer enrichment programs, keeping our kids safe
9 and engaged during the out of school hours.
10 These free, high quality programs are vital,
11 particularly in our neighborhoods that are
12 disproportionately impacted by Philadelphia's gun
13 violence epidemic. We not only provide
14 enrichment activities, but provide mentoring and
15 connection to kids in our community while helping
16 working families across the City.

17 Most of our students know us for our
18 signature field trips, competitions, and
19 culminating events for our chess, debate, drama
20 and Scrabble club. Beyond year round engagement,
21 these joyful events create a diverse community of
22 students and caring adults with similar interests
23 where kids feel like they belong, and the
24 majority of our students come back year after
25 year, continuing to mentor their peers and even

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2 joining ASAP's board of directors as alumni.

3 Students like Brandon, who in his
4 second year as a member of Northeast High
5 School's ASAP chess club, was an innocent
6 bystander at the five point shooting in early
7 March. Despite this very traumatic experience
8 and his long road to a full recovery after being
9 shot multiple times, Brandon was determined to
10 compete with his teammates at the national chess
11 championships in early April. And with ASAP
12 support, I'm proud to say that he traveled to
13 Baltimore for the tournament just a few weeks
14 ago. He is well on his way to recovery.

15 Brandon is just one of our 4,828 Philly
16 kids that ASAP has served this year and 319
17 afterschool and summer clubs at 169 different
18 sites, including 98 district schools, 26 charter
19 schools, 10 libraries and eight rec centers
20 touching nearly every corner of the City. We've
21 engaged thousands of students at more than 70
22 field trips, competitions, and culminating events
23 this year, and we're not done yet.

24 These programs are vital to our
25 children's success in school and beyond, but the

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2 federal grant funding that has allowed for the
3 district's expanded support of afterschool
4 enrichment and out of school time programming
5 over the past two years expires this fall. This
6 means that 8000 of our city's kids stand to lose
7 access to programs like ASAPs, leaving hundreds
8 of Philadelphia parents and families to scramble
9 to find other aftercare options for their
10 children, options that may be expensive.

11 Cutting these programs would negatively
12 impact our kids and hinder the district's
13 progress as it looks to accelerate academic
14 achievement in all our schools. What is the plan
15 for continuing these programs for our children?
16 Where is the funding coming from? We need to
17 invest in our children. Thank you for your
18 support.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 THE CLERK: Next we have William Marmol
22 and Jeron Eldorado (phonetic) Morales.

23 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
24 your name for the record and proceed with your
25 testimony.

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2 MR. MARMOL: Good morning. My name is
3 William Marmol, but my students call me Mr.
4 William. I am both a CCP student and also a
5 school faculty member. So I feel kind of
6 offended neither side has offered me a shirt, but
7 I'd like to start my speech. I'd like to start
8 my speech by referencing Councilman Young's
9 beginning statements on how Philadelphia school
10 funding is so unequal relative to Boston.

11 And I will say that is because in
12 Boston, the minimum wage is \$15 an hour. I will
13 say in Boston, the poverty rate is 15 percent
14 relative to Philadelphia, where it's 25 percent.
15 I will say in Boston, children have options.
16 Children's parents have disposable income to be
17 able to afford the programs for their children.
18 While in Philadelphia, we have a chronic poverty
19 rate that goes back centuries. And until we
20 decide to fix that poverty rate, we will need to
21 continue to fund our schools, because that is the
22 only source of resource so many of our students
23 have.

24 Now, I'd like to talk as a student for
25 the Community College of Philadelphia. This

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2 staff is amazing. They deserve so much more than
3 they have. They know that, I know that, and yet
4 they stay. And I have so much respect to them
5 for that. And when it comes to the students, the
6 students at the Community College of
7 Philadelphia, they are students, but they are not
8 students first. And what I mean by that is, when
9 you go to the Community College of Philadelphia,
10 you see students, but first, they are mothers,
11 they are fathers, they are small business owners.

12 When we provide them public
13 transportation via SEPTA, that is not just a way
14 to school. That is a way to drop their kids off
15 before work. That is a way to work. And if
16 someone cannot get to work, that is someone who
17 can't work. We need to keep these processes
18 going, keep funding these systems. The community
19 colleges are only asking for \$20 million. That
20 will go so far relative to what we already have.
21 Let's keep the fight going.

22 Last week, I had the privilege of
23 shadowing Councilman Mike Driscoll, and I had the
24 privilege of being able to sit in on a city
25 council hearing, and I saw so much that day --

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2 I'll be quick. I'm sorry. I saw so much that
3 day, that City Hall so clearly and so
4 passionately cares about education in
5 Philadelphia. And I know regardless of what
6 happens today, that care is not going to leave,
7 not the city council and not from Philadelphia.
8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you,
11 and thank you for your testimony. I was just
12 commenting that I remember you being with us in
13 the caucus room now that you stated that. So
14 thank you for joining us again this week. Please
15 state your name for record and proceed with your
16 testimony.

17 MR. MORALES: My name is Jeron Eldorado
18 Morales. I am a student of public health at the
19 Community College of Philadelphia. As a
20 committed student at the Community College of
21 Philadelphia, I am a strong advocate for
22 increased funding for our institution. It is
23 essential to recognize that the majority of the
24 school's budget is funded by students like
25 myself. The ideal funding distribution would see

1 4/3/24 - WHOLE - BILL 240179, ETC.

2 a third of the budget coming from the City,
3 state, and from student tuition.

4 However, at present, student tuition
5 bears the brunt of the budgetary burden. This
6 heavy reliance on student tuition puts
7 significant pressure on students to cover the
8 school's financial needs, often causing financial
9 strain and limiting access to education
10 opportunities for those from low income
11 backgrounds.

12 Increased funding is not just about
13 improving academic problems, it's about investing
14 in the future of our community and economy.
15 Funding would support the development of
16 innovative initiatives such as daycare services
17 and affordable transportation, addressing
18 critical needs for students. Lack of access to
19 affordable transportation disproportionately
20 affects students from low income backgrounds,
21 hindering their ability to succeed academically
22 and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

23 Enhanced academic programs and
24 resources made possible by increased funding will
25 directly benefit students. These improvements

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2 are not just about providing a better education.
3 They are about preparing students for success in
4 an increasingly competitive job market. By
5 investing in CCP, we are investing in the future
6 workforce of our city, ensuring that our
7 community remains strong and prosperous.

8 From a public health perspective, these
9 equity issues can have significant impacts on the
10 health and well being of students and their
11 families. Lack of access to affordable
12 transportation and childcare services can lead to
13 increased stress, financial strain, and limited
14 access to educational opportunities. These
15 challenges can sustain a cycle of poverty and
16 contribute to health disparities, ultimately
17 influencing the overall health of the community.

18 As a student who relies on public
19 transportation, I can attest to the significant
20 impact that affordable and reliable bus services
21 would have on my life. Currently, the lack of
22 affordable transportation options makes it
23 challenging for me to attend classes regularly,
24 participate in extracurricular activities, and
25 fully engage in campus life. Solving the bus

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2 issue would not only alleviate the financial
3 strain on transportation costs, but also enabled
4 me to focus more on my academic studies and
5 participate more actively in campus activities.
6 Furthermore, investing in CCP is an investment in
7 the broader community. Is it okay for me to
8 continue?

9 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please
10 conclude your testimony.

11 MR. MORALES: Our school plays a
12 crucial role in fostering a diverse and inclusive
13 environment that contributes to the social and
14 economic growth of our city. Our institution has
15 the potential to provide exceptional support and
16 services to students and staff, but this requires
17 adequate funding. By investing in CCP, we can
18 ensure that all students have the resources and
19 support they need to succeed. Thank you for your
20 time.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you,
23 and thank you for your testimony.

24 THE CLERK: Next, we have Avery Lucas
25 and Aaron Moselle Onokua (phonetic), followed by

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2 Jaritsa Hernandez-Orsini and Ian McGinnis,
3 Francis Scales and Max Hassel, Ben Moore and
4 Melissa Suarez. Is there an Edward Hanson and a
5 Horace Clouden?

6 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
7 your name for the record. It's good to see you
8 again. We just saw in a town hall with
9 Councilmember Gauthier. So state your name for
10 the record and proceed with your testimony.

11 MR. HANSON: Yeah. Good day, Council.
12 My name is Edward Hanson. I'm an educator at the
13 Philadelphia public education system, but the
14 kids call me Mr. Teddy. So I'm a classroom
15 assistant in the third to fifth grade autism
16 support class at Marian Anderson Neighborhood
17 Academy in South Philadelphia. I love my job,
18 and I feel like me and my fellow educators have
19 done a great job with a pretty challenging class
20 this year, a challenge that certainly could have
21 been eased by better funding.

22 I appreciate Mayor Parker's proposal to
23 raise the share of property taxes from 55 percent
24 to 56 percent. We can use it, but really, it's
25 not enough. The current state of the curriculum

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2 does not meet our disabled population where they
3 are at. One of my colleagues who has worked as a
4 classroom assistant for over 30 years told me
5 that she's been teaching out of the same language
6 development books for the entire time of her
7 career. She just retired. That's ridiculous.

8 Additionally, the digital platforms
9 that the district has invested in do not
10 accommodate the spectrum of disabilities our kids
11 have. For example, my one to one, an eight year
12 old by the name of Drew, cannot meaningfully
13 engage with most of this curriculum as he is
14 considered to be low functioning in terms of the
15 autism spectrum. He appears nonverbal and his
16 academic outcomes are limited.

17 Despite that, he manages to endear
18 himself to everybody he encounters, which means
19 to me that there is a lot more that can be done
20 with his language comprehension. Since working
21 with him, his verbalization has improved, but
22 frankly, I'm improvising. 90 percent of that
23 improvement is based off of just me winging it.
24 More could be done for kids like Drew.

25 I believe if we can do anything for our

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2 disabled population, we should provide them with
3 the tools to communicate with others so that we
4 can understand the nuanced and varied ways that
5 they are experiencing the world. And given that
6 caring for our disabled population so often falls
7 into the hands of the public education system, we
8 should do our best to uplift that system in a way
9 that allows our educators to rise to the occasion
10 of that care.

11 Another barrier I found in providing
12 the best care for my students is in my colleagues
13 pay. A classroom assistant starting salary under
14 the current contract is \$9,000 under the poverty
15 line. \$22,000 is not enough to live on, and as a
16 result, we lose good staff. At the beginning of
17 this year, our classroom was fully staffed with a
18 very meaningful and well meaning and effective
19 and cohesive caring team of educators, but by
20 winter break, we lost most of them because of
21 pay.

22 So I ended up -- I'm the only one
23 that's really been there all year, and that's
24 beyond my contractual responsibilities, but I
25 love my job, as I said, so I'm fine to do it.

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2 But I believe that we -- personally, the
3 emotional whiplash -- yeah, I'll wrap up in a
4 sec. Personally, the emotional whiplash of
5 teaching one of my other kids in my class, Edgar,
6 math in the day and then having to go home and do
7 the math on if I can afford three meals for every
8 day this week is exhausting.

9 And I'm both housing and food insecure.
10 I work multiple side gigs just to keep doing this
11 job because I like doing it and I like helping my
12 kids. But the district needs the support to lift
13 up its educators out of poverty and provide us a
14 livable wage. Additionally, you need to give it
15 the support it needs to provide our students with
16 the tools to achieve the quality of life that
17 they deserve, which is why I'm asking the council
18 to consider, instead of 56 percent, raising that
19 share to 58 percent, which would give us an
20 additional 100 million.

21 And just real quick, I appreciate
22 Councilman Young's context of the 4.6 billion
23 operating budget, but I feel like that the number
24 means nothing to us. Most of the people in this
25 room, at the very least, since we don't -- I

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2 don't see it in my pay, I don't see it in my
3 coworkers pay, and I don't think -- and clearly,
4 nobody else is seeing it meaningfully affect
5 their communities. So thank you for your time.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
8 for your testimony. Please state your name for
9 the record and proceed with your testimony.

10 MR. CLOUDEN: Hello. My name is Horace
11 Clouden. This is a little notice to the mayor.
12 The schools have been failing before COVID and
13 continue to fail in the first two years of this
14 current administration. When you talk about
15 special projects, people want to take kudos for
16 things that are going on at schools. They should
17 look at the overall performance of the school.
18 We still have schools that have zero percent in
19 performance, so don't pat yourself on the back
20 for saying, "Well, maybe the school has a new
21 sound system at \$2 million and then the school is
22 producing students that can't read or write on
23 grade level."

24 When you talk about creating green
25 spaces, there is a high school with a 30 panel

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2 solar array on the roof, but it was never turned
3 on. A high school with a geothermal plant for
4 clean energy, we don't know what's going on with
5 that, if it's really truly efficient enough.

6 Then you have a high school with a green
7 certification which has been removed because of
8 overcrowding to the tune of 700 children.

9 Pools. People testified about pools.
10 We shouldn't have to beg to put five pools back
11 online and three of them have diving wells.
12 People don't understand the value of a diving
13 well in a pool. And then for the district to say
14 we have a 3,500 facility staff with additional \$8
15 million in maintenance support already approved--
16 tell the district just to open up all the pools
17 now.

18 You have a superintendent that can tell
19 you -- the school district tells you the school
20 district ranking across the state and the country
21 but can't tell you what each school is ranked in
22 the City of Philadelphia. You now have a new
23 board where four of the nine have been all --
24 where four of the nine have heard all your
25 concerns, it's nothing new, but the response from

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2 that board was, what do you expect us to do? So
3 here you have four of that continuing on to the
4 new.

5 Now, the best solution for the 197,000
6 students in this city is to bring back junior
7 high school schools with preCTE. Here again,
8 there's no checks and balances. They go from K
9 to 8, then they got to find their fit in high
10 school. By the time they find their fit, they're
11 just totally lost. This accelerated Philly plan
12 is moving too slow. We don't need another five
13 year plan. What we need is movement right now.

14 Again, put me on the school board.
15 Look at my application, and then look at my
16 qualifications. We ain't got time to catch the
17 five up to speed on issues when I've been sitting
18 through this stuff for 10 years. Again, do what
19 you feel is right and let's start getting the
20 results that you want, not just somebody coming
21 up defending a failing school district. You have
22 heard that in all your meetings when you talk to
23 the School District of Philadelphia. They just
24 keep defending a failing school district. We
25 don't need any more of that. Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 THE CLERK: Next we have Leah Clouden
6 and Mama Gail Clouden.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Please state
8 your name for the record and proceed with your
9 testimony.

10 MS. LEAH CLOUDEN: Leah Clouden. Good
11 morning. So I'm not going to say don't give them
12 the money, but if you do, or when you do, make
13 sure you have oversight. For years, I've watched
14 this school district pick and choose who will
15 have and who will go without. It's gotten so bad
16 that it's practically trapping children in to
17 slavery. They can't read, write, and do math not
18 only on grade level, but seniors are graduating
19 on a level that the 12 to 14 years attending an
20 educational institution wouldn't even afford them
21 the ability to feed themselves without government
22 assistance.

23 During COVID, we all bear witness to
24 the fact that the majority of the teachers do not
25 live in our city. We've discovered that 80

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2 percent are white teachers. 70 percent of that
3 80 percent are white women. Black children make
4 up 49 percent. 24 percent is Latin or Hispanic,
5 11 percent are white, eight percent are Asian.
6 Why isn't our teacher base reflective of this?
7 90 percent of the money collected goes to
8 salaries. Most districts use 80 percent to 85
9 percent.

10 We ask that the four pools for 212 or
11 214 schools, we ask that you either demand or
12 tell the school district to get them back online.
13 They have a swimming pool that they were using
14 that the students weren't using, but they allow
15 other entities to come in and have tournaments in
16 the swimming pools. Go check it out.

17 They stripped all schools because of
18 COVID or a little prior. So they stripped a lot
19 of schools of the sports. It's like 14 sports in
20 the entire district. You have the northeast or
21 the upper northeast with all the sports. You
22 have everybody else in the entire city going
23 without. You have schools that have one sport,
24 two sports, zero sports, but they have 14 sports
25 on the books.

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2 They also have swimming, which was once
3 a curriculum. When I went to school back in the
4 90s, we had swimming. We walked to William Penn,
5 which the school is no longer here, and we had
6 swimming class, so there's a curriculum. It can
7 happen again. Everything that we've had to allow
8 our residents to be productive citizens, we got
9 at school. This is not rocket scientist. You
10 should not have to graduate through 12 to 14
11 years and have nothing to show for it. And we
12 see that in the street. We see the killing. We
13 know where it's coming from. It's coming from
14 school. Go find out what's going on in the
15 schools.

16 The teachers are not coming to work.
17 They're still being paid. You got substitutes
18 filling in, and everybody knows you do not learn
19 with a substitute teacher. We all know that. Go
20 check out the schools. And no principal should
21 have full autonomy. You have to take that away
22 because everybody is doing whatever and the
23 teachers aren't showing up and everything is
24 being hidden. Thank you.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you.

3 Please state your name for the record and proceed
4 with your testimony.

5 MS. GAIL CLOUDEN: Gail Clouden. That
6 was my husband that spoke previously. He is the
7 engineer that almost died from carbon monoxide
8 poisoning as a result of working in a boiler room
9 at a school. It took six years for him to get
10 his pay after being out sick for a year. I was
11 told two weeks before it happened that he was one
12 of the best in the district.

13 He was a relief engineer that was
14 requested. He was in over 100 schools. He knows
15 these buildings inside and out. I didn't think I
16 was going to talk about him, but I have to
17 because you need to know that when we keep saying
18 oversight, oversight, oversight, this man, who
19 was just diagnosed a few months ago with cancer,
20 still 40 hours a week, he is researching the
21 school district.

22 One day, he had really, really bad
23 pain, and he woke up and he said to me -- and I'm
24 not telling you about him for sympathy. He don't
25 need no sympathy. He's strong. It was told to

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2 me by my husband we need a level playing field.
3 That's all that was on his mind. In the worst
4 pain that he had ever been in, that was what was
5 on his mind. He lives for this, seriously. Not
6 that he doesn't love us, but he keeps talking
7 about the 20,000 children that will be affected.
8 This child is 47.

9 30 years ago, I sat as a superintendent
10 of the network. I had just put them in public
11 school from private school. I sat and I heard a
12 man tell me when I asked him, if this system that
13 you have now, that they were going to do the
14 middle school, high school model, "Do you have a
15 time period where if it doesn't work, you'll go
16 back to what we have now, which was kindergarten
17 to sixth grade?" Right? He told me my question
18 was so ludicrous he was going to answer.

19 On that day, I became the activist that
20 I am because we have records showing that from
21 that period to now, there's been failure. We
22 have lost children in between K to eight. Our
23 children are too grown in eighth grade to be in a
24 school with kindergarteners. The kindergarteners
25 are too young to be with the eighth graders.

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2 With all that's going on, we have to change that.

3 It's not complicated.

4 My husband will tell you, over summer,

5 the whole school district was transformed, over

6 one summer. Why can't we change this back? Even

7 if we do a model, like he's saying, 20 schools.

8 You have models all over the district, 10

9 children, 10 schools. I'm just saying, listen to

10 what he's saying. I had a whole lot more to say,

11 but I need to say that. And thank you for

12 listening. Peace and love.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you

15 for your testimony and for your service.

16 THE CLERK: Is there anyone else here

17 that had signed up for testimony whose name has

18 not been called or is still waiting for their

19 name to be called? Okay.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: We will now

21 recess until 1:30.

22 (The meeting was recessed.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: We will

24 continue our afternoon session for public

25 comments. Ms. Loughhead, will you please call the

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2 first witness?

3 THE CLERK: Do we have Judith Robinson?

4 Carol Rogers? Sherrie Cohen? Tanya Rambert?

5 Kelsey Leon? Sonya Sanders? Margaret

6 Lowenstein? Mark Clincy?

7 MR. CLINCY: Yeah, I'm here.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Come on up,

9 Margaret, Mr. Clincy. Good afternoon. Just

10 state your name for the record and please begin

11 your testimony.

12 MS. LOWENSTEIN: Thanks for the

13 opportunity. My name is Margaret Lowenstein. I

14 am a Philly resident in Councilman Squilla's

15 district, and also I'm an addiction medicine

16 physician at University of Pennsylvania. I'm

17 here to comment on some of the budgetary issues

18 regarding people who use drugs in Philadelphia.

19 I'll say my testimony does not represent the

20 views of my employer, but it does represent my

21 views as someone who's taken care of people with

22 addiction for the past decade, seven of those

23 years in Philly. Oh, sorry. Thank you.

24 So over this time, I have seen how bad

25 the overdose crisis has gotten in our city, as

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2 I'm sure many of you have witnessed, and
3 reflecting what I've learned in my own practice,
4 one huge takeaway stands out, the critical nature
5 of syringe exchange programs and other harm
6 reduction services in reducing risk and promoting
7 recovery. Defunding syringe exchange in our city
8 is unwise. These programs have proven again and
9 again to be incredibly effective in reducing HIV
10 and hepatitis. They also reduce the risk of
11 catastrophic infections to the bloodstream, heart
12 valves, and other really serious complications.
13 And they save money. For pennies on the dollar,
14 we know that we can reduce these costly
15 complications and save taxpayer money.

16 One of my colleagues who trained during
17 the early days of the AIDS epidemic recently
18 reflected that on our addiction service right now
19 in our hospital, there are very few patients with
20 HIV, and prior to syringe exchange, HIV infection
21 would have been near universal in this group.
22 This is not a place that we want to return to.

23 Beyond the risk reduction that these
24 programs provide, I've seen how treatment
25 programs that incorporate harm reduction

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2 principles are the most effective way to reach
3 many patients. People often cite the statistic
4 that patients who engage in syringe service
5 programs are five times more likely to enter
6 treatment. And from my experience, that's
7 because programs that embody harm reduction
8 principles are often the only places that
9 patients feel welcomed and safe and get care
10 that's effective and humanizing.

11 Programs that are willing to meet folks
12 where they are create a more effective treatment
13 relationship than when treatment is forced or
14 takes a zero tolerance approach. And so we all
15 know that the overdose crisis is a huge issue in
16 our city. I think it's not time to abandon
17 things that work, but rather to scale up things
18 that do. So we need to think about housing,
19 access to treatment with methadone and
20 buprenorphine, and effective medication. We need
21 to scale up inpatient beds and in-services that
22 integrate wound care and other medical needs.
23 And these are the real barriers to treatment.

24 There's a lot of ways that we can
25 thoughtfully address this crisis. And so I think

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2 there's an opportunity in this budget season to
3 make it happen. Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you.
5 Go ahead, Mr. Clincy.

6 MR. CLINCY: Hello. My name is Mark
7 Clincy. I am a member of Philly Thrive and a
8 resident of District 2. There are many low
9 income people in the urban community that cannot
10 afford to have their homes repaired. It is
11 important to keep people in their homes. People
12 have lived there for 30, 40, 50 plus years.
13 People want to keep homes in the families so they
14 can pass it on to the next generation or next
15 family member. Without assistance, how are they
16 going to repair their homes?

17 Some residents are being forced to
18 leave their homes because developers want the
19 properties, and it's coming at the cost of the
20 community, the raising of rent, the raising of
21 mortgage, real estate taxes that they can't
22 afford, and they're struggling just to make sure
23 that's paid. And Napa Street is a very, very
24 good example of what is happening.

25 We need 5 million for the Built to Last

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2 Home Repair program. This program is unique
3 because it provides clean energy, weatherization,
4 and solar energy for low income homes. In
5 addition, other home repair programs, like
6 Restore, Repair, Renew, operate by providing
7 loans for home repairs. Now, this is a good
8 system for some, but it is inaccessible to low
9 income people or people in the urban community.

10 We need 5 million for Built to Last
11 because it is both a green option that supports
12 the low income homeowners to make repairs and
13 stay in their homes. It is a win-win program.
14 Thank you for letting me be here today.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you.

17 MR. ROBINSON: Good afternoon,
18 President to the city council. I just wanted to
19 put this on the record. We have two schools in
20 our neighborhood. I'm in the 4th Ward. Curtis
21 Jones is our councilperson. I'm also the vice
22 president of 4th Ward. There's two schools in
23 our community that's closed. And the only thing
24 I would like to say to you, President, we need
25 more understanding. He's not communicating with

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2 us about the schools. Also our recreation
3 center, the mayor gave us a lot of money. We got
4 \$17 million. We're not getting communication
5 what's going on with our recreation center.

6 So I'm only here on behalf of my people
7 and my community. We just want more information
8 what's going on about these schools that's closed
9 and also about our recreation center, because I'm
10 one of the ones that walked the mayor around,
11 Kenny, when he first got into office, and he told
12 us that he was going to give this money to us,
13 but we have no communication about our new
14 recreation centers coming. And like I said, I'm
15 on the board. I'm executive democratic vice
16 president of councilman. He's our ward leader.
17 I'm asking for this body to please give us more
18 information about what's going on. That's the
19 only reason why I'm here. Thank you very much.

20 I missed last Thursday's council. Hope
21 I'll be here tomorrow. But I wanted to say this
22 to you, President. Y'all doing an excellent job
23 as far as this budget hearing. I think it's very
24 -- I heard a whole lot, just like you, and I
25 think y'all going to make the right decision for

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2 we, the people, that come here and just want the
3 right things for us. So I just wanted to add
4 that on the record as well. So thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
7 very much. Give your first and last name for the
8 record.

9 MR. ROBINSON: Marvin Robinson, the
10 mayor of West Philadelphia.

11 MS. SANDERS: Hi, my name is Sonya
12 Sanders. I'm a longtime resident of Grace Ferry.
13 I came here as -- I'm part of Philly Thrive, but
14 I came here as a resident. I lived at 1433 South
15 32nd Street for 27 years. I just want to tell
16 you all about my house particularly. Living
17 there, I've encountered old pipes. The back of
18 my wall is falling down. The roof is falling
19 apart. It was so bad that we had to -- bugs
20 coming in, and we had to tape the walls. The
21 bricks are not aligned. Downstairs in the
22 basement, if you look up, all you see is the
23 beams and the floorboards. And the sheetrock is
24 falling apart as well.

25 My husband, Ray, who has passed away

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2 from cancer, we had applied for different
3 programs, but he didn't qualify because it's
4 either dollar \$300 over or \$300 under. And you
5 have to apply for different programs for
6 different things done in your house. I'm
7 extremely happy about this Built to Last program
8 because you can apply for just one place to get
9 everything. Okay.

10 So I'm for this \$300 -- I sorry, \$5
11 million Built to Last program, and I just think
12 that it'd be great for my community. I think
13 that it's great for these houses to be repaired.
14 People can stay in the community and get the help
15 they need. So as a Philly Thrive member, I say
16 we need this. And I vote yes.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Ms.
19 Loughead, call the next witness.

20 THE CLERK: Theresa Carr? Ashley
21 Rosario? Margaret DiSanto? Makeia Elizabeth?
22 Darlene Morris? Jeff Williamson? Brianna
23 Robinson? Avery Lucas? Aaron Moselle Onokua?

24 MR. CHRIS: All right. My name is
25 Onokua Aaron Moselle Chris, and I'm a student of

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2 the Community College of Philadelphia. And I'm
3 also formerly the first vice president for the
4 Student Government Association.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Where your
6 squad at? Y'all said y'all was coming down and
7 join this today. We here to support y'all.

8 MR. CHRIS: Yeah. I guess they're
9 downstairs. Can we just wait a little bit for
10 them to show up?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Absolutely.

12 MR. CHRIS: All right. Thank you so
13 much.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Let me have
15 somebody else from Philly Thrive. That was the
16 only person, Mr. Clincy and the other young lady.
17 Okay. Well, we thank y'all for coming down,
18 South Philly in the building, Grays Ferry. So
19 appreciate Philly Thrive, doing what y'all need
20 to do.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: We
23 recognize your advocacy, your hard work, and so
24 we definitely pay attention. We'll be advocating
25 with the administration. There's also a budget

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2 hearing in Grays Ferry, I think you know,
3 tomorrow night at 6:00 p.m., 26 and Tasker. So
4 make sure you're there and talk about this
5 particular program, so when we do go into
6 negotiations, they will see that as city council
7 is advocating for support for this particular
8 program, also, the neighbors from the actual
9 community is out here supporting and advocating
10 for this particular program.

11 Built, Repair, Renew will be a 5
12 million appropriation to match 5 million that
13 will come from the federal government, which will
14 make it a total of 10 million. And it also
15 complements the works that's being done with
16 Restore, Repair, and Renew. So we do here you
17 loud and clearly. I think we're going to have to
18 go and start --

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: -- and then
21 when your team come, we'll let them join you. So
22 go ahead and get started.

23 MR. CHRIS: All right. Today I'm here
24 as a testament to the power of education and
25 opportunities it can unlock. My journey began

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2 with a simple dream, to become a medical doctor
3 and make a difference in the world. Living
4 behind my family, I embarked on a 14-hour flight
5 from the Bosnia Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos,
6 Nigeria, to the iconic JFK Kennedy Airport.
7 Little did I know that this journey will lead me
8 to the Community College of Philadelphia, the
9 path to possibilities.

10 In this new environment, I found myself
11 surrounded by astute scholars and empathetic
12 professors who nurtured my curiosity and fueled
13 my passion for learning. It was there, amidst
14 the corridors and vibrant classrooms, that I
15 discover my true potential. During my academic
16 journey at the Community College of Philadelphia,
17 I had the privilege of being involved in a
18 groundbreaking research project.

19 Together with my peers, we explored how
20 anthropogenic contaminants alters the microbial
21 diversity in the aquatic ecosystem system of the
22 Delaware watershed. Our findings not only
23 contributed to the field of science, but were
24 also published in the esteemed journal of
25 Advanced Technological Education. But my journey

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2 didn't stop there.

3 I had the honor of representing the
4 college at the annual Biomedical Research
5 Conference for Minority Students and recently
6 presented at the prestigious National Conference
7 on Undergraduate Research in Long Beach,
8 California. Standing alongside over 4000
9 students across the country from Harvard
10 University, University of Pennsylvania, Yales
11 University, Columbia University, and so on, I
12 felt a sense of pride knowing that I was part of
13 something truly remarkable.

14 None of this would have been possible
15 without the unwavering support of the dedicated
16 staff and professors at the Community College of
17 Philadelphia. Their guidance, encouragement, and
18 belief in my abilities have been the driving
19 force behind my sources. To each and every one
20 of them, I offer my heartfelt gratitude.

21 As I stand here today, I am filled with
22 joy and gratitude for the countless opportunities
23 that the Community College of Philadelphia has
24 provided me. My journey may have begun with a
25 simple dream, but it has been enriched and

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2 transformed by the experiences and opportunities
3 that I have encountered along the way.

4 I urge the city council to consider
5 providing funding for initiatives that support
6 groundbreaking research work at the Community
7 College of Philadelphia. These investments not
8 only advance our understanding of the world, but
9 also provide invaluable learning experience
10 experiences for students like me. Together, let
11 us continue to empower and inspire the generation
12 of scholars and leaders. Thank you, everyone,
13 for believing in the power of education to change
14 lives. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you.
17 Just state your name.

18 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORSINI: My name is
19 Jaritsa Hernandez-Orsini.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: You could
21 begin. You're from Community College as well,
22 student government?

23 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORSINI: Yes.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Welcome. I
25 want to acknowledge it was Nina Ahmad my who

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2 talked about the importance and need for all of
3 you having a voice. We did get the email, and
4 then Councilman Mark Squilla called me and said,
5 "Can we make sure you get on the agenda for
6 public comments?" So we appreciate your
7 enthusiasm, your passion, your commitment to come
8 down and advocate for your school. You could
9 begin.

10 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORSINI: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon. My name is Jaritsa, and I'm standing
12 before you today representing the Community
13 College of Philadelphia, the Student Government
14 Association and those who are too afraid to speak
15 their mind. I'm brought here by the overwhelming
16 need for your efforts and continued support in
17 funding the Community College of Philadelphia.
18 After undergoing many traumatic experiences, CCP
19 has been the best thing that's ever happened in
20 my entire 23 years of life.

21 A year ago today, I was completely
22 blindsided by the challenges that life had me
23 face. I grew up in the foster care system. I've
24 been on my own since I was 15. I've always
25 struggled to navigate through life without help

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2 on my side. As you can imagine, doing it alone
3 is hard. During all this hardship, however, I
4 reached my breaking point in 2021 when my house
5 burned down. I was deprived of everything, my
6 shelter, personal belongings, my savings, my
7 entire sense of stability. I had nothing but the
8 clothes on my back.

9 Amid the chaos and despair, CCP
10 welcomed me with open arms and provided me with
11 the resources and support that I needed to regain
12 my life. Thanks to the incredible programs and
13 resources offered at CCP, I was able to not only
14 continue my education, but thrive in ways I never
15 thought possible. I'm honored to say that I'm
16 graduating this Saturday and have been admitted
17 into Temple University to continue my studies in
18 finance.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORSINI: Thank you.
21 Without the programs offered at CCP, I would not
22 have a roof over my head as I was fortunate
23 enough to reside in CCP's on-campus shared
24 housing at my time here. Though, as much as CCP
25 has done for me, I know that there are countless

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2 other students who are facing similar struggles
3 and challenges. This is why I stand before you
4 today urging you to increase your financial
5 support to the Community College of Philadelphia
6 and its students.

7 Your contributions make a world of
8 difference in the lives of students like me,
9 students who come from nothing and students who
10 are simply trying to get by. With your help, we
11 can ensure CCP remains a beacon of hope and
12 opportunity for all students. Thank you for your
13 efforts and continued support. I would not be
14 where I am today without CCP. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you
16 very much. Next two speakers, please.

17 MR. GALES: How are we doing? My name
18 is Francis Gales. I am CCP student like
19 everybody else, but I just wanted to say good
20 afternoon and thank you for your time. City
21 Council, I'm going to have to improvise a little
22 bit. I had exams. Like all of us at CCP, school
23 comes first.

24 The community of people I've met in my
25 time at CCP has altered their trajectory of my

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2 life and has changed my worldview. But this
3 community is only possible because of the low
4 tuition costs and support programs in place. The
5 city council must not only continue these
6 programs, it must further improve them given the
7 fact that over 90 percent of CCP graduates stay
8 in Philadelphia and contribute to the local
9 economy.

10 One initiative that can open the door
11 up for education to Philadelphians poverty
12 stricken at a level of around 25 percent is the
13 SEPTA Key Advantage program. CCP and its student
14 body are not looking for a free lunch. We are
15 looking to make public transportation accessible
16 to all scholars. This will not only provide
17 social benefit, it will stimulate the economy and
18 be profitable for SEPTA, allowing them to regain
19 some of their prepandemic levels of ridership. A
20 study conducted with over 100 international
21 cities found that each dollar invested in public
22 transportation stimulates \$5 in economic
23 activity. The bottom line is this, we need
24 funding for Community College of Philadelphia.

25 It is also pertinent that the students

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2 take part in the governance of our institutions.

3 Students are ready to take on the responsibility

4 of having a member on the board of trustees.

5 This will ensure that our institution remains

6 forward facing and helps students. City Council,

7 thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. FAZLOON: Good afternoon, Council

10 and audience members. My name is Saad Fazloon

11 (phonetic). I am from Sri Lanka and have been

12 living in Philly for a little over a year. One

13 of the goals of SGA is to remove financial

14 barriers when it comes to transportation. I take

15 the Market€"Frankford Line to 15th Street followed

16 by the two bus to Callowhill.

17 Guaranteeing students free transpasses

18 would be the first step in regards to student

19 education while also lessening the financial

20 burden of low income students. A good majority

21 of students at CCP are low income and that live

22 in the City and rely heavily on public

23 transportation. I believe an investment in

24 public transportation through CCP would benefit

25 students tremendously. Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank you both
3 for your testimony. We appreciate it. And good
4 luck with your academic journey. Will the clerk
5 please call the next witnesses to testify today.

6 MR. FAZLOON: Thank you.

7 MS. ROBINSON: Good afternoon. Queen
8 Judith Robinson here today to speak on the behalf
9 of the school district budget. I'm going to
10 preface my testimony by stating I'm a native
11 North Philadelphian, Strawberry Mansion, public
12 school graduate, 8475 Simon Gratz High senior
13 class president, real estate broker of nearly 40
14 years. And I come before you today for all those
15 who could not be here today.

16 I am excited about coming here based on
17 something that happened to me back in fourth
18 grade, a public school. My public school
19 teacher, fourth grade, Ms. Graves, took me to the
20 sixth grade student council meeting and I was
21 hooked since then. That's when we had
22 citizenship in school a long time ago. But
23 that's why I come before this body as often as I
24 do, because I've been trained to do that in the
25 public school. Yeah.

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2 So for all those who could not attend
3 today, I'm going to say it ain't that deep as I
4 watch you all maneuver back and forth. No one of
5 us is smarter than all of us. It's not that
6 complicated watching you all with -- I'm going to
7 call it politics, okay -- maneuvering back and
8 forth. I just wish, and I challenge you all,
9 especially the African Americans, to make sure
10 you focus on student proficiency. Make sure that
11 our students can read and write on great level.
12 I just wish I could see all of that kind of
13 energy in that regard for that in all of our
14 schools, because it's so important.

15 I really started to focus on the
16 schools back in 2013. I didn't have any students
17 in the school at the time and they were trying to
18 close down all of our schools in North
19 Philadelphia. So I saw what a mess it was, but
20 since we're under the same restraints of three
21 minutes, I'm going to get to it and say, I am on
22 the environmental advisory council. So I'm
23 watching capital projects. \$5 billion in capital
24 projects and not the kind of energy our students
25 would need to work on those remediation jobs.

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2 They're going to have to know reading and math,
3 all of that.

4 There's going to be a naming of the
5 school district after Dr. Constance Clayton. She
6 was definitely an educator. It's going to be a
7 shame to have the school district building named
8 after her. We have low proficiency for our
9 students, especially African American students.

10 I really want to talk about the
11 bullying policy, but since I'm under this two
12 minute pressure and I never go over, bullying
13 policy should be started in the beginning of the
14 school year. Prevention is the key. Problems
15 start in the schools. I was at the School
16 District of Philadelphia back a year or so ago
17 talking about the bullying policy and how it
18 should start at the very beginning of the year,
19 and all the folks that are there now and here now
20 moved into other positions were there at the
21 time.

22 And from that day to this day, bullying
23 hasn't been a focus. If it was, I think we could
24 have laid some of the horrible things that has
25 happened as relates to students, either that are

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2 dropped out of school, should be in school, or
3 under school age for sure. We need to give
4 teacher support so that way we can demand
5 proficiency.

6 It ain't that deep, y'all, for all this
7 maneuvering that I've saw over the past few days.
8 And I'm challenging every last one of you all,
9 let me see what you working with when it comes to
10 proficiency for our students. Thank you very
11 much for your attention.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. HANSEN: Good evening, Council and
14 audience members. My name is Dave Luthvi
15 (phonetic) Hansen and I'm proud to South
16 Philadelphia. I am here to ask members of the
17 council to consider two propositions. First, an
18 increase in budget for the Community College of
19 Philadelphia, specifically in terms of public
20 transportation.

21 90 percent of our graduates, including
22 myself, we stay in the Philadelphia area. This
23 translates to approximately 1,400 individuals who
24 will support and uphold the local economy. I
25 believe this number would be higher if CCP

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2 students were given free transportation, since
3 student success is directly correlated to
4 attendance. As a CCP scholar, I believe
5 transportation shouldn't be an obstacle to my
6 education, and free public transportation would
7 allow more students to travel to their education
8 and would not be a loss but an investment in the
9 future of Philadelphia.

10 The second proposition is an
11 observational position in any discussions that
12 would affect the Community College of
13 Philadelphia and subsequently the students, as
14 well as the board -- as well as a seat on the
15 board of trustees for students. Four other
16 community colleges in PA have a student chair on
17 their board of trustees.

18 Discussions and bargain meetings are
19 closed off to students, and I find it ironic that
20 students have no representation in their college
21 when, as Americans, we fought for our right for
22 representation. Having a seat on the board of
23 trustees as well as an observational position in
24 any discussions and bargain meetings will allow
25 students to stay informed and send a

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2 representative who will speak on the behalf of
3 students. SGA and the student body as a whole
4 have no representation in their college that we
5 hold dear. And we respectfully ask the members
6 of this council to right that wrong. Thank you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank you for
8 your testimony, and similar to the other students
9 at CCP. Good luck on your academic journey. We
10 appreciate you all taking the time to be here.
11 Clerk, please call the next witness.

12 THE CLERK: Is there Max Hassel, Ben
13 Moore, or Melissa Suarez present? Is there
14 anyone else here that wishes to testify whose
15 name hasn't been called?

16 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Chair recognizes
17 Councilmember Ahmad.

18 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank you, Chair.
19 I just wanted to commend all the students who
20 were here today. It reminded me of myself. And
21 I did not have a community college option, which
22 I would have exercised. I was not in the state
23 when I was at that stage in my career. And that
24 CCP affords so many of you an education, and then
25 a transition to a four year college is deeply

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2 appreciated. And the stories you told us here
3 today are going to be taken to heart.

4 And I want to commend you. People tell
5 us young people don't show up, they don't come
6 when it's important, they don't speak. Here is a
7 perfect example of all of you doing what --

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Absolutely. You
10 are changing the narrative. And I want to
11 commend your teachers who are here too advocating
12 for you and for themselves to make sure that we
13 have an equitable education system that allows
14 you to thrive, because each one of you are a
15 jewel in our crown. And we must make sure you
16 have the opportunity, with the support of
17 teachers who are well remunerated, to do this
18 work. This access to education is fundamental,
19 and our communities, our colleges allow us that
20 effort.

21 And for us in Philadelphia to grow
22 means we need to retain all of you. We need to
23 keep you here. We need to make sure you are
24 gainfully employed, start businesses, whatever it
25 is you want to do, because your money circulates

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2 in our economy, and that is how we are going to
3 grow Philadelphia back to the 2 million we were.
4 So keep doing what you're doing, get more people
5 involved, have your voice. And I commend you and
6 your teachers for having representation here
7 today. Thank you, Chair.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Thank you,
10 Councilmember. Before I pass it to Councilmember
11 Landau to close out, I just want to make sure
12 that we have given everybody an opportunity who's
13 here to speak about the budget the platform to be
14 able to do so. Okay. Hearing none, Chair
15 recognizes Councilmember Landau.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Thank you. And
17 not only do I want to echo what my colleague Nina
18 Ahmed said about how important it is for you to
19 have access to a great education and your
20 teachers and your professors, I want to say that
21 it is hasn't gone unnoticed for us that in the
22 past couple of days, when we've been hearing
23 testimony from the school district, from
24 community college, from so many advocates that
25 are trying to make sure that we have institutions

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2 that are well funded and producing great
3 scholars, it has not gone unnoticed for us of how
4 many people have talked about homeless youth,
5 both in high school and lower grades, and also at
6 CCP.

7 It is heartbreaking to hear your
8 stories, the struggles you have to go through in
9 order to just live full lives and to get your
10 education. And I promise you, we are going to
11 work on this. I promise you that we want to make
12 sure that everybody has a roof over their heads
13 and can get a good meal and get to school and do
14 exactly what we know what you're going to do when
15 you get there with all the support that you need.
16 So thank you so much for coming out.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Chair
18 recognizes Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
19 Richardson.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Yes. I too
21 wanted to just thank our colleagues as well for
22 your remarks and just echo their sentiments and
23 really thanking all the young people who are
24 here. And also, I see Philly Thrive here, our
25 environmental activists, and -- we work with all

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2 of you, but particularly to the students,
3 continue to raise your voices, continue to be
4 civically involved and engaged, and know that you
5 too can make a difference in this process, not
6 just in your communities, but also politically.

7 And we know that we have Queen here,
8 and we thank you for the work that you do as
9 well, but each and every one of you who are here,
10 too many to name, we are so appreciative of the
11 advocacy. I have to say, for the Central
12 students who are here, I am a proud alumna of the
13 Philadelphia High School for Girls, class of 245.
14 And so we often had the opportunity to work with
15 our fellow Central Lancers and have the
16 opportunity to attend some of your games.

17 And so we're really, really
18 appreciative, appreciative of you all being here
19 and taking the time out to participate in local
20 government and politics. And I know each of you
21 have very bright futures and careers ahead of
22 you. Thank you very, very much.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Thank you.
24 Hearing none, okay, we will take a short recess
25 before we -- Councilmember Thomas.

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2 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Last thing. I
3 agree with all of my colleagues. As you go on
4 your journey, use City Council as well for
5 internships. We're always looking for young
6 people and college students to participate in
7 internships, to learn how your government works
8 and then use the things that you learn to put
9 yourself in a position to further your
10 professional career.

11 So, like everybody else said, thank you
12 so much for being here, to everybody who came to
13 testify. But those of us who are in City Council
14 often knows that when young people come down,
15 it's just a little extra special. So thank you
16 all. We appreciate it.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: At this
18 moment, we'll take a very brief recess, and then
19 we will shortly adjourn.

20 (The meeting was recessed.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The Chair
22 recognizes Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
23 Richardson for a motion to adjourn.

24 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON: Thank you,
25 Council President. I move that City Council's

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2 Committee of the Whole stand in recess until

3 Monday, May 6 at 10:00 a.m.

4 (Duly seconded.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: It has been

6 moved and properly seconded to the public hearing

7 and meeting on the bills and resolutions before

8 the committee today. Stand in recess until

9 Monday, May 6, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. All those in
10 favor, signify by saying aye.

11 (Aye.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Those

13 opposed?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON: The ayes

16 have it, and the motion carries. The committee

17 will stand in recess until Monday, May the 6,

18 10:00 a.m., 2024.

19 - - -

20 (Committee of the Whole adjourned at 5:25

21 p.m.)

22

23

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2 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

3

4 I, SAM TINEGA, Legal Transcriptionist, do hereby
5 certify:

6 That the foregoing is a complete and true
7 transcription of the original digital audio recording
8 of the proceedings captured in the foregoing matter.

9

10 IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
11 this 25th day of May, 2024.

12

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Sam Tinega

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